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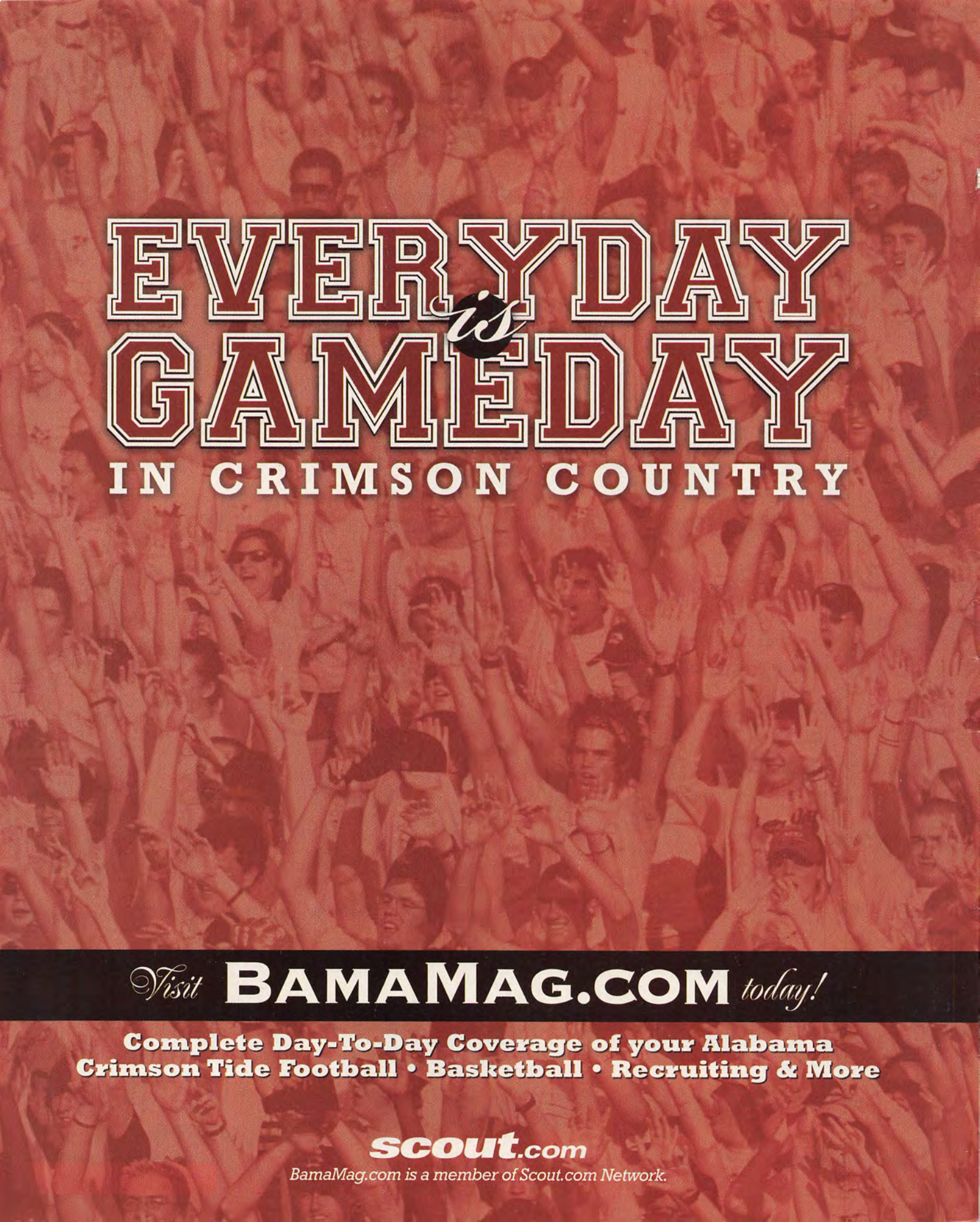
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Editor
Kirk McNair

Recruiting Reporter
Andrew Bone

Feature Reporters
Gentry Estes, Cary L. Clark, Peter Edmund,
Andrew Varble II, Walter Bostock,
Arnold P. Steadham, Becky Hopf,
Scott Latta, Lindsay Laurent

Photos
Kent Gidley, Barry Fikes,
Benjamin Cohen, Butch Dill,
Stuart McNair, Cory Johnson,
Jessica Smith, Camelle Sizemore

Assistant To Editor
Vera Dowdle

scout.com
Scout Publishing, LLC.

Senior Director, Scout Publishing
Alan McDonald

**Executive Director,
Network Development & Marketing**
Joel Cox

Director Of Scouting
Scott Kennedy

Advertising & Sponsorships
Eddie Pauline

Ad Traffic Manager
Mike Dempsey

Recruiting Editor
Dave Telep

Photography
Getty Images

Creative Director
Jay Torrell

Production Manager
Shannon Coffey

Graphic Designer
Garth French

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Fellow Crimson Tide Fans,

I can understand that so many people think things "slow down" for me following a bowl game. Not so, though. Football season is probably the busiest time for me, but it also the most structured. Monday at midday we have Coach Nick Saban's major press conference, and we have a few players to talk to following the coach. Tuesday we talk to more players after practice. Wednesday we get Coach Saban in a slightly less structured setting, only the day-to-day beat writers on hand with fewer television, radio and internet site reporters than on Monday. And if there was a player we need to talk to and failed to get earlier in the week, we pick him up on Wednesday afternoon. Most of this reporting is on our internet site, BamaMag.com, but we also use it for magazine work.

By Thursday we've got enough material from Alabama, the opponent, the Southeastern Conference, and internet questions to pretty much finish up the week's pre-game stories. We might put up one more early Friday, but we don't do anything to jeopardize our 18 meetings with Mr. Greens.

Saturday is game day—in some respects the easiest day of the week for a reporter. It's much easier to write a game story than to discover who is going to be the new assistant football coach.

Sunday we wrap up any leftovers from Saturday and make plans for the next week's coverage.

Our coverage on BamaMag.com takes up most of the time during football season, but we also have magazine deadlines. Some of them are awkward, particularly late in the year as we push things along in order to get printing and mailing done in the holiday season from Thanksgiving through the New Year.

We also have a schedule of radio and television interviews (Yeah, I know; I've got a face for radio.), and frequent chats with reporters—particularly those in the Scout Media organization—who cover opposing teams.

This football season I got started on another book regarding Alabama football, and you'll be getting information on that later.

I also speak on a fairly regular basis to Red Elephant and Quarterback clubs and University of Alabama alumni groups.

So football season is fulltime work, but it's reasonably predictable.

When football season is over, the mad scramble is on. There's football recruiting on two front burners. But the winter sports have kicked in, and spring sports are just around the corner. Although not to the extent of football, we cover it all, and the better the teams do, the more we cover them. We continue to cover football, too, and it's a little more difficult with Coach Saban and players not accessible on a regular basis.

Post-football season is also the time in many years for football staff changes to take place, and that takes some investigating (mainly to disprove rumors).

We have to start tinkering with rosters and depth charts (we use depth charts whether the football team does or not) for our coverage of spring football practice and A-Day.

And the book deadline is smothering.

Some of the fall extracurricular activities—speeches and interviews—continue, particularly near Signing Day and during spring football practice.

Hopefully we'll have a run through the SEC and NCAA basketball, baseball and softball tournaments. The rowing team has some home events, so I might have to park my bod somewhere along the Black Warrior River for a few hours (Cyprress Inn, perhaps?) to catch that action.

I'm just explaining, not complaining.

Sincerely,
Kirk McNair

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'BAMA Scorecard

Notebooking Crimson Tide Sports

Hey, Y'all! Watch This!

The University of Alabama's 12-2 football season under second-year Coach Nick Saban included some of the most watched college football games of the fall, according to *The Sporting News* and the Nielsen ratings.

Alabama appeared on national television 10 times in 2008 with games on CBS, ESPN and FOX. Alabama was also on ESPN's popular "College GameDay" show four times in 2008 against Clemson, Georgia, LSU and Florida.

Two Alabama games rated among the Top 10 most watched regular season games on network television in 2008, including the highest rated collegiate game of the season. The 2008 SEC

Championship Game featuring number one Alabama and number two Florida drew a 9.3 rating and was viewed in 15.3 million homes. The Crimson Tide's thrilling overtime win at LSU on November 8 was the ninth-highest rated game of the season on network television with a 5.2 rating.

The Crimson Tide was also a popular choice on cable this season as three games televised by ESPN ranked among the Top 10 football telecasts on cable this season. The Alabama-Georgia game on September 27 was ESPN's second-highest rated game of the season with 4.6 rating. The Alabama-Mississippi State game on November 15 placed seventh with 3.3 rating, while the Alabama-Tennessee game on October 25 was the 10th highest rated game with 2.8 rating.

In addition to its success on television, the Tide also had a successful year at the gate, recording the eighth-highest home attendance in college football this season. Alabama's seven games at Bryant-Denny Stadium drew 644,996 fans, an average of 92,138 per game and all seven games were at 100 per cent capacity. The Tide went 7-0 at Bryant-Denny Stadium this year with wins over Tulane, Arkansas State, Kentucky, Mississippi, Arkansas State, Mississippi State and Auburn.

Wells Inducted

Alabama Baseball Coach Jim Wells, the dean of Southeastern Conference baseball coaches, was inducted



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into the Alabama Baseball Coaches Association (AlABCA) Hall of Fame in January at the 2009 AlABCA Annual Meeting and Coaching Clinic in Birmingham.

Wells was joined by Randy Putnam (Wallace State Hanceville), Ron Nelson (Central Phenix City High School) and Rick Patterson (Hueytown High School) as this year's inductees into the AlABCA Hall of Fame.

Wells also received the ALABCA Division I Coach of the Year Award after leading the Crimson Tide to a 35-28 record and the school's 19th NCAA Regional appearance last season. Wells almost didn't coach that season. He had decided to retire, but was convinced by Alabama Athletics Director Mal Moore to return. Wells was also the organization's Coach of the Year in 1997, 1999, 2002 and 2006.

"This is a tremendous honor for me," Wells said. "To me, it's more about the players, coaches and people associated with your program. I am humbled by this honor and very appreciative."

Wells was named UA's head coach on June 4, 1994, and quickly revived a program that had become the doormat of SEC baseball. Wells inherited a team that won four SEC games in 1994 and one season later led the Crimson Tide to an SEC Tournament Championship and was one game from playing in the 1995 College World Series.

He has compiled a 588-300 (.662) record since his arrival in Tuscaloosa. Alabama has made three College World Series (1996, 1997 and 1999) appearances, won two SEC (1996 and 2006) championships and seven SEC Tournament (1995, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2002 and 2003) titles. The Crimson Tide has also played in 11 NCAA Regionals - winning four - and two NCAA Super Regionals. Overall, Wells is 782-389 (.668) in 19 years at the Division I level.

In addition, Wells has seen 10 former UA players play Major League Baseball, including three first-time MLB players in 2008. The list includes Tim Young, Dustan Mohr, Lance Cormier, Paul Phillips, Andy Phillips, Taylor Tankersley, Jeremy Brown, David Robertson, Tommy Hunter and Wade LeBlanc.

Wells shared the platform with former Alabama baseball letterman Jerry Belk, the recipient of 2009 AlABCA Distinguished Service Award. Belk is the former director of the Tuscaloosa County Parks and Recreation Center and served as head coach at several Tuscaloosa high schools. He was also the head coach for the Tuscaloosa Post 34 team that captured the 1968 American Legion National Championship.

Belk played third base for Coach Tilden "Happy" Campbell at Bama and earned three letters from 1952-54. He was a career .300 (65 for 217) hitter with 42 RBI in 55 games. He hit .366 (15 for 41) as a senior in 1954 with a team-high six doubles. He led UA with 31 hits and two triples in 1952 and paced the club in at-bats (77) and RBI (12) in 1953. A standout defensive third baseman, Belk compiled a .956 career fielding mark at the hot corner and made only 10 errors in 228 chances.

The AlABCA Hall of Fame is the second honor for the Crimson Tide head coach. He was inducted into the Northwestern State Hall of Fame in 2004 and his jersey No. 17 was also retired by his alma mater.

track star were among the eight new inductees for the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame. A statewide selection committee chooses inductees, which will now number 283. The first class was selected in 1969.

The 40th class will include former Alabama football players Charley Hannah, John Mitchell and Tommy Brooker. Also selected for induction was former Bama track star Steve Bolt.

Charley Hannah, a member of one of Alabama's most famous football families (father Herb and brothers John and David were all Tide stars), was co-captain of the 1976 Alabama team and an All-Southeastern Conference selection. He played seven years with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, then six years with the Los Angeles Raiders. He was a member of the Raiders Super Bowl champions (Super Bowl XVIII vs. the Washington Redskins). He was selected to the NFL Films All-NFL Team in 1985.

John Mitchell was the first African-American to play in a football game for Alabama, starting against Southern Cal in the Crimson Tide's upset of the Trojans to start the 1971 season. He was also Alabama's first African-American All-America, earning the honor in 1972. He was a two-time All-SEC player and captain of the Tide as a senior. He started in 24 games in which Alabama had a record of 21-3 and two SEC championships. The Mobile native played two years of junior college football before joining the Tide. His Bama statistics included 125 tackles with 12 behind the line of scrimmage, eight sacks, and five caused fumbles (one recovered). His career in college and professional coaching includes his present position as assistant head coach and defensive line coach for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

All three former Alabama football players selected for the ASHOF are former players under famed Crimson Tide Coach Paul Bryant.

Tommy Brooker was selected in the Old Timers Category (those who participated prior to 1967). Brooker, who was also inducted into the inaugural Marengo County Hall of Fame in his hometown of Demopolis this year, was a member of the 1961 National Championship team. He was honorable mention All-America and first team Academic All-America. He played five years for the Kansas City Chiefs (tight end and placekicker) and was an All-Pro and played in the first ever Super Bowl. He holds the record for the longest field goal in the AFL Pro-Bowl of 46 yards. He never missed an extra point in his five year pro career (149 consecutive). He shares the AFL record of eight consecutive field goal attempts made in a game. He led the team in scoring three times. In his rookie year in the AFL made all of his 33 extra-point attempts and 12 field goals. Kick a 24 yard winning field goal in the second overtime of the AFL Championship game in 1962, at the time the longest game in pro football history. He founded the Alabama A Club Educational & Charitable Foundation.

Steve Bolt was the first runner in Alabama to break the four-minute barrier in the mile run, winning the 1976 Southeastern Conference indoor championship for the Crimson Tide, a record that still stands. In 1973 he was voted the High School Track Athlete of the Year by *Track and Field News* after running the fastest mile in America-four minutes and seven seconds (still the high school record in Alabama). He was a three-time All-America at Alabama. Received a track scholarship to Alabama and was a three time All-American. He is one of a handful of runners in the world to break the four minutes in the mile and two hours and fifteen minutes in the marathon. At one time in the late 1970s and early 1980s he held distance record in Alabama for the following: the mile (3:59),

Hall Of Fame Inductees

Three former Alabama football players and a former Crimson Tide

the two mile (8:37), the 5,000 meters (13:50) and the marathon (two hours and 14 minutes). He has won four marathons including one in England.

The 2009 induction banquet will take place in the Birmingham Ballroom, at the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel, Saturday, May 30, 2009. Reception and banquet tickets will be available at a later date.

Baumhower On Honor Roll

Bob Baumhower became the 18th member of the Miami Dolphins Honor Roll during halftime ceremonies of the Dolphins game against the San Francisco 49ers at Dolphins Stadium. As a member of the Dolphins-famed "Killer Bees" he and teammate Doug Betters will be the first two defensive linemen to earn this honor.

He was a second-round draft choice of the Dolphins in 1977 out of Alabama and went on to play in 130 regular season games, 129 of which were starts. He racked up 888 career tackles and 39.5 sacks, a figure which is tied for seventh in team history and the most among defensive tackles. He became a full-time starter at nose tackle in his rookie season, the first year in which the Dolphins employed a 3-4 defense. The Dolphins went 10-4 that season as they held opponents to a 3.7-yard average per rush attempt. He also registered four sacks, a figure that ranked second on the team that year. By his third season (1979), he was voted to the AFC Pro Bowl squad, the first of five such selections in his career, second-most among defensive linemen in club annals and tied for third-most among defensive players. He had his best season in 1981 when he notched 90 tackles, including a career- and team-high nine sacks, the most-ever by a Dolphins interior lineman, as the Dolphins claimed the AFC East title with a record of 11-4-1. He played in 125 straight games to open his career, the fourth-longest games-played streak in Dolphins history and the longest to start a career. He also started 86 consecutive contests to open his NFL tenure. The Dolphins posted seven double-digit win seasons in his first nine years.

He was a two-time All-SEC tackle at Alabama and twice named to All-America teams. He is a member of the All-Decade Team at of the seventies. He was inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame in 1995.

His former Alabama and Miami teammate, center Dwight Stephenson, is also a member of the Honor Roll. He said, "Bob is one of the most genuine people. He cares about the community. It's good to see a guy like him get this honor. As far as a football player, he was a competitor. He taught me a lot about competing. Going against him every day was definitely one of the things that helped make me a much better player."

Don McNeal said, "It was a great opportunity to play with both of those guys, especially Bob. I was a teammate of his at The University of Alabama and then the Dolphins. When I was a rookie, he indoctrinated me as a member of the Miami Dolphins. He is a great person and was a great player. I think it's a great honor and a great feat for him to go into the Honor Roll."

Ken Donahue Honored

An old story had it that Alabama Football Coach Paul Bryant and a friend were driving by Coleman Coliseum, where the football offices were on the second floor. One light was on. The friend asked Bryant about it and the coach said, "That's Ken Donahue up there making me a legend."

Donahue, whose work ethic was legendary as he served as

defensive coordinator under Bryant, was the recipient of the American Football Coaches Association Outstanding Achievement Award. The award was presented posthumously during the AFCA convention in Nashville in January. The AFCA Board of Trustees created the award in order to recognize AFCA members, past and present, who have achieved outstanding success while coaching in football.

Alabama Director of Athletics Mal Moore who worked alongside Donahue as the Crimson Tide's offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, said, "Coach Donahue was certainly one of the greatest coaches I was ever associated with. He was such a gentlemen. The coaches and players respected him. He was a hard worker and he instilled that work ethic in his many great defensive units. The University of Alabama is very proud of his many accomplishments and for what he meant to the Crimson Tide program. This is such a deserving honor and I would like to thank the AFCA for recognizing Coach Donahue and his excellent career."

Donahue, who died March 21, 2001, is best known for his years as defensive coordinator under Bryant at Alabama. A tireless worker, Donahue spent 21 years on the Alabama sideline and tutored an Alabama defense that led the nation in scoring defense three times in 1966 (3.7 points per game), 1975 (6.0) and 1979 (5.3).

"There's no one who coached the game of football who is more deserving than Ken Donahue to receive the 2008 Outstanding Achievement Award," former Tennessee Coach Johnny Majors said. "I have been associated with several outstanding coaches throughout my career, and I know of no one who was more dedicated to achieving excellence on a day-to-day basis than Coach Donahue. He was an extremely loyal individual to his school, his fellow coaches and to the players he coached. Ken demanded excellence and 100 per cent effort from his players on every play, and those players respected him. Nobody could work players harder, or with more intensity, than Coach Donahue. He taught the players how to play the game like it should be played."

Donahue once told 'BAMA Magazine he had no desire to be a head coach, that he preferred the nuts and bolts of actual coaching. He spent 38 years as an assistant coach. Donahue began his coaching career at Memphis State in 1951, where he was the defensive line coach for four years. In 1956, Donahue returned to Tennessee as defensive coordinator, line coach and special assistant to Bowden Wyatt until 1960. In 1960, his defensive unit led the SEC in pass defense, allowing only 53.8 yards per game.

From there, Donahue coached at Mississippi State for three years (1961-63), working alongside former teammate Johnny Majors. The 1963 Bulldog team, on which Donahue and Majors were assistants to Paul Davis, played in the Liberty Bowl as the first Bulldog team to participate in a bowl game in more than 20 years.

In 1964, Donahue joined Bryant's staff at Alabama. With Donahue serving as defensive coordinator at The Capstone, Alabama led the SEC in fewest yards allowed seven times, in rushing defense nine times and in pass defense three times. During his 21 years as defensive coordinator, Alabama won 11 SEC titles and three national championships.

His defensive units led the SEC in scoring defense 10 times (1964, 1965, 1966, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1978 and 1979), including six times in the 1970s. Alabama also led the SEC in rushing defense nine times (1967, 1968, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1978, 1979 and 1980), total defense seven times (1966, 1971, 1972,

1974, 1975, 1979 and 1980) and passing defense five times (1966, 1974, 1979, 1980 and 1984) under Donahue's leadership. In 1975, Donahue was named the SEC "Working Coach of the Year" after the Crimson Tide led the nation in scoring defense (6.0 points per game) and ranked first in the SEC in rushing defense (94.3 yards per game) and total defense (186 yards per game). He also earned that award in 1985 as an assistant at Tennessee.

In 1985, Donahue returned to Tennessee and served as defensive coordinator, line coach and special assistant on Majors' staff. Donahue spent four years with the Vols before retiring from coaching after a brief stint as a consultant with the Philadelphia Eagles. His dedication to football and coaching earned the hard-working Donahue recognition in 1985 when *The Football News* singled him out as doing the best work by an assistant coach in all of college football.

A Corryton, Tennessee, native, Donahue attended Central High School in Knoxville before he went on to play football for Tennessee. He played offensive tackle under head coach General Robert R. Neyland, and was a member of the 1950 team that was 11-1 and won the Cotton Bowl.

Now That's A Winning Streak

The Alabama gymnastics team beat Auburn University by the slimmest margin possible in the opening event of the year, posting a 195.675-195.650 win in Beard-Eaves Memorial Coliseum on the Auburn campus in front of 6,784 fans. In the first all-around of her career, senior All-America Brittany Magee led the Crimson Tide with a 39.275.

Alabama has run its winning streak to 96 against the Tigers.

Nationwide Tour

Former Alabama golfer Joseph Sykora qualified for fully exempt status on the 2009 Nationwide Tour following the completion of the PGA Qualifying Tournament in La Quinta, California.

Sykora battled through the challenging PGA Q-School, which consists of three phases of qualifying before the final stage that has six rounds split between the PGA West Nicklaus Tournament Course and the PGA West TPC Stadium Course. He finished the final stage of qualifying tied for 70th place with an 11-under 421 after 108 holes of golf.

Sykora was a three-time Academic All-America at Alabama. The Daphne native finished second at the 2008 SEC Championships and won two individual collegiate championships during his Alabama career. A perfect 4.0 student, he has bachelor's and master's degrees in accounting. He made SEC history in April of this year as a three-time SEC Scholar-Athlete of the Year in the sport of men's golf. He also won the H. Boyd McWhorter Award as the top student-athlete in any sport in the SEC in 2008 and The University of Alabama's Bryant Award signifying the school's top student-athlete.

New Assistant

Alabama Head Volleyball Coach Judy Green has added a new assistant coach, Pavlina Steffkova came to Bama from Birmingham-Southern College, where she was head volleyball coach.

Steffkova spent six years at Birmingham-Southern, two as head coach and four as an assistant. She helped guide the Panthers to an overall record of 59-11 while at the helm. At the conclusion of the 2008 season, two of Steffkova's players, junior Alex Norten and sophomore

Christine Denning, were recognized on both the conference and national level. Norten earned a spot on the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference's Volleyball All-Sportsmanship Team, and Denning received Third-Team CoSIDA Academic All-District honors.

As an assistant coach with Birmingham-Southern, Steffkova helped steer the Panthers to three straight appearances in the Big South Conference Tournament semifinals. She coached nine all-Conference selections that included the program's first-ever First-Team All-Big South selection, Lindsey Herzog, in 2004.

Before joining the Birmingham-Southern staff, Steffkova served as an assistant coach at Arkansas. As a member of the Razorbacks' crew from 2000-2002, she helped lead Arkansas to two NCAA tournament appearances while compiling a record of 64-32. In her final year in Fayetteville, the Razorbacks went 27-6 and were ranked among the top teams in the country. In the summers, Steffkova took on additional duties as the assistant director of the Arkansas volleyball camps in 2001 and 2002. She also served as a coach for the Ozark Juniors Volleyball Club.

Steffkova began her coaching career as a graduate assistant coach at the University of Tennessee at Martin from 1999-2000. Her recruiting efforts were seen just two years after her departure when the Skyhawks captured the 2002 Ohio Valley Conference title earning an NCAA Tournament appearance.

Steffkova was a two-year letterwinner at Texas where she received Big 12 All-Academic Honor Roll distinction. She spent her first two years of college at Jefferson College in Hillsboro, Missouri, where she was an NJCAA All-America and member of the National Championship All-Tournament Team. Steffkova also earned AVCA Junior College All-America honors and NJCAA Academic All-America recognition. In 2007, she was inducted into the NJCAA Hall of Fame.

Steffkova received her bachelor's degree in economics as well as a business foundations certificate from Texas in 1998. In 2002, she earned her Master of Education in recreation and sports management from Arkansas.

Volleyball Junior Honored

Brooks Webster has one more season of volleyball to play and she'll do so as one of the most honored players in Alabama history. Following the 2008 season, the Baltimore native was selected to the South Region team and honorable mention All-America by the American Volleyball Coaches Association.

Webster, an outside hitter, is the fifth player in Alabama history to be named to the South Region team and the third in history to receive All-America recognition.

The All-SEC performer collected 12 double-doubles and rattled off 20-plus kills on five occasions. She led Alabama in kills with 424 total. Webster topped the conference in kills with an average of 4.17 per set against league opponents and notched a career-high 26 in Alabama's win at Georgia.

On the defensive end, she scooped up 287 digs, which was second best on the team. At the net, Webster racked up 45 blocks with 17 of those solo.

Webster played in all 105 sets for the Tide leading Alabama in point production where she was responsible for an average of 4.54 points per frame. She was also voted to three all-tournament teams early on in the fall and was named MVP of the Crimson Tide Invitational. ■

Review And Outlook

Good 2008 part of process to excellence

An adage regarding weather forecasting is that tomorrow's weather will be like it is today. Sure, the weather changes, but not every day, and so a good bet is that if it's sunny today, it will be sunny tomorrow. That's the tact taken by most who predict college football. If a team was good last season, it will be good next season. Let's hope so.



Javier Arenas
stars on defense
and kick returns

Stuart McNair

Alabama was good in 2008, better than all but the most optimistic Crimson Tide football fan could have predicted. Alabama was 12-2, undefeated in regular season play, a Sugar Bowl participant. Even though the Tide had a poor finish, losing in the Southeastern Conference Championship Game and in the Sugar Bowl, it was an accomplishment to reach both those venues. As it turned out, Alabama lost to two teams with a combined 26-1 record that finished one-two in the final Associated Press poll (Florida, 13-1, and Utah, 13-0).

Indications are that many prognosticators will select Bama to be strong again in 2009.

The expectation in the Alabama camp is the same. And that can be said for 2010, 2011, etc. Expectations are always high for Crimson Tide football, even when losses are severe. Alabama had only nine scholarship seniors, but in addition to those nine, the Crimson Tide lost two high profile juniors who elected to go into the NFL draft.

Consider that the losses include:

- Quarterback John Parker Wilson, a three-year starter and the holder of basically every Alabama passing record. (Alabama has had a few good quarterbacks, so Wilson's records are meaningful.)
- Tailback Glen Coffee, tied for second all time in Alabama rushing yardage with Shaun Alexander and trailing only Bobby Humphrey.
- The best offensive lineman since Chris Samuels in Andre Smith.
- The most important offensive lineman, center Antoine Caldwell.
- Three-year starter at offensive guard Marlon Davis.
- Both tight ends, Travis McCall and Nick Woodall.
- Wide receivers Nikita Stover and Will Oakley.
- Over-achieving defensive end Bobby Greenwood.
- The best defensive player and leader of the defense, strong safety Rashad Johnson.

Bama has also lost at least two assistant coaches, both from defense, and, specifically, both from the linebacker coaching ranks. Kevin Steele (head coach for defense and inside linebackers coach) is taking his expertise to Clemson, where he'll be defensive coordinator for Tigers new head coach Dabo Swinney, and Lance Thompson (outside linebackers coach who had been outstanding as a recruiter) is joining the staff of new Tennessee Coach Lane Kiffin.

The primary reason Alabama will be expected to be strong again in 2009 is Crimson Tide Head Coach Nick Saban.

Following the bowl game, Alabama players had a short break then got back to the business of the off-season program. Throughout the season, Saban pointed to the post-bowl period of early 2008 being when "a critical mass" of Crimson Tide players "bought in" to the Saban process. It's not likely Bama players aren't firmly on board with that now, and the success of last fall should make for enthusiastic weight room and conditioning work. There will also be some healing, players getting over injuries from last fall (including unconfirmed reports of minor surgeries for the likes of B.J. Scott and star receiver Julio Jones).

Alabama is scheduled to begin spring practice on Monday, March 23, the day after spring break at The University ends. Last year spring practice was interrupted by spring break. The A-Day Game will be Saturday, April 18.

While the Tide lost two potential returning players in Coffee and Smith (and surely everyone had planned on Smith not being a part of 2009 plans), Bama picked up four new players for spring practice. They are junior college offensive lineman James Carpenter, early high school graduate offensive lineman Chance Warmack, Hargrave prep school transfer lineman (offense or defense) Kerry Murphy, and running back Jermaine Preyear, a grayshirt after signing in 2008 but undergoing fall surgery.

Alabama's 12-2 season in 2008 included the Crimson Tide spending five weeks at number one in the nation, and being ranked sixth at the conclusion of bowl games. Bama was 12-0 in regular season play and defeated a number of ranked teams in winning the SEC Western Division.

In New Orleans, Saban said, "We need to continue to improve as a program for the future. We need more good players, more depth in the program. We need quality big people. We need quality skill guys. We need a lot of things for us to continue to improve to be the kind of program that is recognized as kind of a dominant program on a national level."

One reason Alabama could be expected to improve is that the Tide played 16 freshmen last year.

Everything Alabama football does, in season and out, is aimed towards being as good as possible. Thus it is in spring football practice, every player striving to be his best, thus making the whole as good as possible.

Spring is also a time when players have new opportunities. It didn't matter how good an offensive lineman might have been in 2008, he wasn't likely to take Andre Smith's job. Now that left tackle position is available. And so are the others where players have been lost.

No one disputes that quarterback is the most important position on the field. Alabama's loss of Wilson means the spring will include a battle to replace the three-year starter with a man who is

untested at the college level.

It is not fair to compare the practices of legendary Alabama Coach Paul Bryant to others. Times were different. Many of the Crimson Tide head football coaches who have followed Bryant have been influenced by professional football, and that may be where the practice of not playing back-up performers was developed.

A college team has a player for a few years, no more than four or five, the very best such as Andre Smith frequently for only three. Nonetheless, college teams frequently play only one quarterback, only one set of offensive linemen. Substitution is more frequent at other offensive and defensive positions.

Rest assured, Saban is not concerned that no quarterbacks in the Alabama camp have had meaningful college game action.

The Bryant philosophy was that once he thought a game was won, he began getting in players who might be needed because of injury or who might be needed the following season. Of course, he had a lot more players than most teams have today.

And even Bryant sometimes had an untested quarterback. Anyone who watched the 1962 A-Day Game would have been convinced that Joe Namath couldn't do the job that Pat Trammell had done. Prior to the 1966 season, Bryant said he didn't have a quarterback "unless you count (Kenny) Stabler."

Perhaps Bama has a Namath or Stabler in the fold.

Former Alabama Coach Mike DuBose had the best answer for not playing back-up offensive linemen.

"I don't want to get my quarterback killed," he said.

Mathematics fans among the Alabama faithful might see spring

What It Means To Be Crimson Tide

*Gene Stallings and Alabama's
Greatest Players*

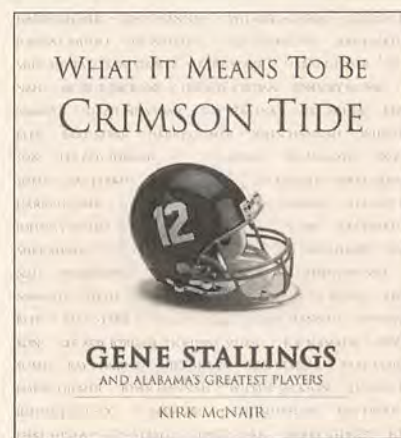
Alabama football means championships and All-America players and, for many, a man in a houndstooth hat. Some 60 Alabama players who performed over a 75-year period tell us "What It Means To Be Crimson Tide."

Former Alabama Coach Gene Stallings and BAMA Editor Kirk McNair selected players who tell the stories of games and practices, coaches and teammates. The story of "What It Means To Be Crimson Tide."

Among those featured are Harry Gilmer, Bart Starr, Lee Roy Jordan, Joe Namath, Ken Stabler, Johnny Musso, John Hannah, Ozzie Newsome, and Jay Barker.

Gene Stallings reveals much of his philosophy and reveals why he did NOT follow Paul Bryant as Alabama head football coach in 1983. Kirk McNair introduces the players.

"What It Means To Be Crimson Tide—Gene Stallings and Alabama's Greatest Players" is a hardcover book of over 300 pages in an oversized format with archival photographs throughout. To order (\$27.95 plus tax, shipping and handling) call 1-205-345-5074. You may request a personalized autograph from Kirk McNair.





Opposing teams had trouble with Tide nose tackle Terrence Cody

Stuart McNair

practice as scholarship tryouts. Once again, Saban is challenging the arithmetic crowd with his recruiting. Bama is at or above 20 commitments for the February 4 Signing Day and there are whispers that the Tide may add as many as 30. You can do the math, but better to trust that Saban has a plan.

In a seminar during the American Football Coaches Association annual convention in Nashville in January, Saban discussed relevancy. Mark McCarter of the Huntsville Times covered the event and quoted Saban as saying:

"People who won't respect and do what they're supposed to do relative to the team, you have to make them irrelevant in the organization. You don't have to kick them off the team. You have to make them irrelevant in the organization.

"There are guys that were star players at Alabama who don't play any more. They're still on the team. They just don't play. They won't do the things that our program says you need to do. We have mandatory class attendance... When you choose not to get out of bed, you're saying screw you and the team and the principles of value that everybody on the team had to adhere to. Or we can't be a team. It's chinks in the armor, man."

Following the disappointing 31-17 loss to Utah in the Sugar Bowl, Wilson was asked where the Crimson Tide program had been left by those who had completed their careers.

Wilson said, "I think we changed the attitude, the mentality of the team, that we can go out there and play with anybody. It was a lot different my freshman and sophomore year than it is now."

In New Orleans, Alabama Offensive Coordinator and Quarterbacks Coach Jim McElwain talked about spring preparation and competition at the quarterback position. He said, "We've got to find out what they do best and then how it's going to fit with the rest of our offense.

"We're going to do what it takes to win, and so if that means we adapt our offense differently to take advantage of our personnel, we'll do it. I've got nothing against the spread nor am I solely an old school guy. We're going to look at what we have and make the decision based on the players. We're not just replacing a quarterback, we're replacing some great offensive linemen. We'll have a lot of things to look at."

After quarterback, most attention is likely to be on tailback. Mark Ingram is the likely successor, particularly with Roy Upchurch expected to be limited or out of spring work following "a procedure" involving his neck prior to the Sugar Bowl game.

Bama's tight end situation is complicated by the Tide having had a senior both as starter and back-up last year. Brad Smelley earned playing time as a freshman and looks like a big play type tight end. And that's also the reputation of senior transfer Colin Peek, who missed the Sugar Bowl with an injury.

The offensive line is an area that would be classified as "of concern" by many. Those five men are considered a team within a team. Sixty per cent of that "team" is gone, only left guard Mike Johnson and right tackle Drew Davis returning. Two All-America players—40 per cent of that front—are lost.

Offensive Line Coach Joe Pendry has players learn different positions, so there can be some shifting. But in the end, the offensive line is going to include at least three men with very little or no college game experience.

On defense, the Tide must find a replacement for defensive end Bobby Greenwood, hopefully a rush end who can put pressure on opposing passers. Although there could be changes among first teamers, the rest of the front seven returns, as do a number of top backups in the defensive front.

While the secondary lost only Rashad Johnson, Saban and company will work returning starters and others with the goal of having greater consistency in pass coverage. Chris Jackson has already moved from a wide receiver position to the defensive backfield and there has been talk of slot receiver B.J. Scott making a similar move. Saban has indicated Ali Sharrief has earned a shot at the safety spot and that Robby Green could get more playing time at cornerback.

Alabama does go into spring practice with both its 2008 kicking specialists, punter P.J. Fitzgerald and placekicker Leigh Tiffin. ■

2009 Alabama Football Schedule

09/05 -- Virginia Tech (in Atlanta)

09/12 -- FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL

09/19 -- NORTH TEXAS

09/26 -- ARKANSAS

10/03 -- at Kentucky

10/10 -- at Ole Miss

10/17 -- SOUTH CAROLINA

10/24 -- TENNESSEE

10/31 -- Open

11/07 -- LSU

11/14 -- at Mississippi State

11/21 -- UT-CHATTANOOGA

11/28 -- at Auburn

Tentative 2009 Alabama Spring Football Roster

No	Name, Pos	Cl	Hgt	Wgt	Exp	Hometown
1	B.J. Scott, DB/WR	So	5-11	188	1L	Prichard
2	Star Jackson, QB	Fr	6-3	195	RS	Lake Worth, Fla.
3	Kareem Jackson, RCB	Jr	5-11	192	2L	Macon, Ga.
4	Marquis Maze, WR	So	5-9	167	1L	Tarrant
4	Mark Barron, SS	So	6-2	215	1L	Mobile
5	Roy Upchurch, TB	Sr	6-0	201	3L	Tallahassee, Fla.
5	Jerrell Harris, SLB	So	6-3	215	1L	Gadsden
6	Demetrius Goode, TB	So	5-10	197	Sq	LaGrange, Ga.
6	Patrick Bryant, QB	So	6-3	208	Sq	Trussville
8	Chris Rogers, RCB	Sr	6-0	195	3L	Lakeland, Fla.
8	Julio Jones, WR	So	6-4	210	1L	Foley
10	Morgan Ogilvie, QB	Fr	6-0	185	RS	Mountain Brook
11	Brandon Gibson, WR	So	6-1	196	Sq	Mobile
12	Greg McElroy, QB	Jr	6-2	220	1L	Southlake, Texas
13	Cory Reamer, SLB	Sr	6-4	218	2L	Hoover
13	Robert Ezell, QB	So	5-9	163	Sq	Athens
15	Darius Hanks, WR	Jr	6-0	172	1L	Norcross, Ga.
15	Alonzo Lawrence, LCB	Fr	6-1	190	RS	Lucedale, Miss.
16	Thomas Darrah, QB	So	6-5	212	Sq	Newnan, Ga.
17	Brad Smelley, TE	So	6-3	218	1L	Tuscaloosa
19	Chris Jackson, S/WR	So	6-1	190	1L	McDonough, Ga.
20	Tyrone King, S	Sr	5-11	198	2L	Birmingham
21	Prince Hall, MLB	Sr	5-11	235	3L	Moreno Valley, Calif.
22	Mark Ingram, TB	So	5-10	215	1L	Flint, Mich.
23	Robby Green, RCB	So	6-0	180	1L	New Orleans
23	Jermaine Preyear, RB	Fr	5-11	205	HS	Mobile
24	Marquis Johnson, LCB	Sr	5-11	192	3L	Sarasota, Fla.
25	Rolando McClain, MLB	Jr	6-4	249	2L	Decatur
26	Ali Sharrief, S	Sr	5-9	205	3L	Stevenson
27	Justin Woodall, SS	Sr	6-2	220	3L	Oxford, Miss.
28	Javier Arenas, LCB	Sr	5-9	198	3L	Tampa, Fla.
29	Terry Grant, TB	Jr	5-9	190	2L	Lumberton, Miss.
30	Dont'a Hightower, WLB	So	6-4	250	1L	Lewisburg, Tenn.
31	Ivan Matchett, TB	Fr	5-10	215	RS	Mobile
32	Eryk Anders, JLB	Sr	6-2	227	2L	San Antonio, Texas
33	Hampton Gray, DB	Jr	6-1	188	Sq	Northport
34	Jeramie Griffin, RB	So	6-2	228	1L	Batesville, Miss.
35	Charlie Kirschman, LB	Jr	6-2	228	1L	St. Augustine, Fla.
36	Chris Jordan, WLB	So	6-2	220	1L	Brentwood, Tenn.
37	Robert Lester, S	Fr	6-2	210	RS	Foley
39	Kyle Pennington, DB	So	5-11	170	RS	Chatom
40	Baron Huber, FB	Sr	6-3	249	3L	Knoxville, Tenn.
41	Courtney Upshaw, JLB	So	6-2	230	1L	Eufaula
42	Jennings Hester, WLB	So	6-3	219	Sq	Atlanta, Ga.
43	A.J. Walker, WR	So	6-1	185	Sq	Huntsville
44	Corey Smith, PK/P	So	6-0	195	Sq	Bunker Hill, W.Va.
45	Ch. Higgenbotham, MLB	Jr	6-0	218	2L	Birmingham
45	Sam Snider, WR-P	So	5-10	163	Sq	Norcross, Ga.
46	Wesley Neighbors, DB	Fr	6-1	200	RS	Huntsville

No	Name, Pos	Cl	Hgt	Wgt	Exp	Hometown
48	Travis Sikes, WR	Jr	6-2	194	1L	Nashville, Tenn.
50	Brian Selman, SN	Sr	6-0	211	2L	Vestavia Hills
51	Michael DeJohn, LB	So	6-0	220	Sq	Hoover
52	Alfred McCullough, OG	Jr	6-2	317	Sq	Athens
53	Darren Hallman, SN	Fr	6-3	230	RS	Panama City, Fla.
54	Glenn Harbin, LB	Fr	6-6	245	RS	Mobile
55	Chavis Williams, SLB	Jr	6-4	223	2L	Dora
56	Calvin Lee, LB	FR	6-2	220	RS	Columbia, S.C.
57	Marcel Dareus, DL	So	6-3	280	1L	Birmingham
58	Nick Gentry, DL	Jr	6-3	263	1L	Prattville
60	Scott Deaton, OL	Sr	6-6	286	Sq	Birmingham
61	Carson Tinker, SN	Fr	6-1	230	RS	Murfreesboro, Tenn.
62	Terrence Cody, NT	Sr	6-5	365	1L	Fort Myers, Fla.
63	David Williams, OL	Fr	6-3	270	RS	Tuscaloosa
66	Brian Motley, LG	Jr	6-2	289	1L	Autaugaville
67	John Michael Boswell, RT	So	6-5	300	1L	Northport
68	Taylor Pharr, RT	Jr	6-6	285	1L	Irondale
70	Evan Cardwell, C	Sr	6-2	279	2L	Killen
72	Tyler Love, LT	Fr	6-7	290	RS	Mountain Brook
73	William Vlachos, C	Jr	6-0	305	1L	Birmingham
74	David Ross, RG	Jr	6-3	295	2L	Homewood
75	Barrett Jones, LT	Fr	6-5	280	RS	Memphis, Tenn.
75	Chance Warmack, OL	Fr	6-4	230	HS	Atlanta, Ga.
77	James Carpenter, OL	Jr	6-5	305	JC	Hephzibah, Ga.
78	Mike Johnson, OG	Sr	6-6	299	3L	Pensacola, Fla.
79	Drew Davis, RT	Sr	6-7	300	1L	Evergreen
80	Mike McCoy, WR	Sr	6-2	205	3L	Rankin, Miss.
81	Andrew Friedman, PK	Sr	6-2	212	Sq	Fairhope
82	Earl Alexander, WR	Jr	6-4	216	1L	Phenix City
84	Colin Peek, TE	Sr	6-6	250	Sq	Jacksonville, Fla.
85	Preston Dial, TE	Jr	6-3	245	1L	Mobile
86	Chris Scott, WR	Jr	5-11	175	Sq	Birmingham
87	Chris Underwood, TE	So	6-3	224	Sq	Birmingham
87	Drew Bullard, LB	So	6-03	241	Sq	Florence
89	Michael Williams, TE/DE	Fr	6-6	270	RS	Reform
90	Milton Talbert, DE	Jr	6-3	263	1L	Hattiesburg, Miss.
91	Alex Watkins, LB	So	6-3	218	Sq	Brownsville, Tenn.
92	Damion Square, NT	Fr	6-2	290	RS	Houston, Texas
92	Kerry Murphy, OL/DL	Fr	6-4	315	HS	Hoover
94	Undra Billingsley, DE	Fr	6-3	275	RS	Birmingham
95	Brandon Deaderick, DE	Sr	6-4	287	3L	Elizabethtown, Ky.
96	Luther Davis, DE	Jr	6-3	299	2L	West Monroe, La.
97	P.J. Fitzgerald, P	Sr	5-11	198	3L	Coral Springs, Fla.
97	Lorenzo Washington, DE	Sr	6-5	275	3L	Logansville, Ga.
98	Brandon Fanney, JLB	Sr	6-4	257	2L	Morristown, Tenn.
98	Heath Thomas, P	Sr	6-3	213	Sq	Montgomery
99	Josh Chapman, NT	Jr	6-1	305	1L	Hoover
99	Leigh Tiffin, PK	Sr	6-1	199	3L	Muscle Shoals

Honors Abound

Saban, players get recognition

Alabama Football Coach Nick Saban is an outstanding speaker, in no small part because he is passionate about his beliefs regarding success on the football field and in life. He lives those beliefs and shares them in speeches. A lot of people got to hear him in this year's post-season as he collected a handful of national coach of the year awards.

Saban wasn't the only one connected with Alabama football to be honored for the Crimson Tide's excellent 2008 season. Several players were also honored, led by Andre Smith, who won the Outland Award as the nation's best lineman. Smith, center Antoine Caldwell, and nose tackle Terrence Cody were all selected first team All-America by more than one group and others earned one All-America citation.

Alabama opened the 2008 season with an upset of Clemson, went undefeated through regular season play and earned a number one ranking for five weeks, and played in the Sugar Bowl. Bama finished 12-2 a year after having been 7-6.

Nick Saban was national coach of the year



There was some irony in one of Saban's awards. Although he shows disdain for the media, the Football Writers Association of America honored Alabama's coach with its coach of the year award. The FWAA has selected a coach of the year since 1957 and Saban is only the second coach to win the FWAA award at two different schools.

The award is named for Eddie Robinson, the longtime Grambling coach. Saban was named the winner for the second time in six years and was honored with a banquet in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in connection with the BCS National Championship Game.

"Nick Saban has proven to be a winner wherever he has gone," said 2008 FWAA President Ron Higgins. "He has re-established Alabama as a national power in quick fashion. He was an overwhelming choice by our members for this very prestigious award."

Saban also won the award in 2003 at LSU. Only Lou Holtz (Arkansas 1977, Notre Dame 1988) previously has been the winner at two different schools.

Saban was also selected

as winner of the Liberty Mutual Coach of the Year Award for major colleges. (Other winners were Mickey Matthews of James Madison University, Chuck Broyles of Pittsburg (Kansas) State, and Larry Kehres of Mount Union.)

The Liberty Mutual awards were conducted by the National Football Foundation and College Football Hall of Fame with selection based on success, integrity, and sportsmanship both on and off the field.

Archie Manning, chair of the NFF, said, "These four coaches represent all that is great about college football. They share a collective belief that how you win is every bit as important as winning itself. They value and demonstrate respect, sportsmanship and civic involvement, and have left a positive footprint on their universities, their student-athletes, and their communities."

Saban is generous in his support of various charities, notably Nick's Kids and The University of Alabama's program for those who are the first in their families to go to college. The Liberty Mutual Award came with tangible reward in that area. Each winning coach receives \$50,000 from Liberty Mutual Insurance to support his favorite charity and \$20,000 in scholarship funding for his school's alumni association. Now in its third year, the Liberty Mutual Coach of the Year charitable and scholarship donations total \$680,000. The winners also will be recognized in the permanent Liberty Mutual Coach of the Year display at the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Indiana.

The Nick's Kids Fund he started when coaching at Michigan State continues to be a shining example of Saban's concern for disadvantaged children, and since arriving in Tuscaloosa the Fund has distributed more than \$540,000 to 115 charities. And this past June, Saban and his wife, Terry, announced a \$1 million gift to benefit Alabama's first-generation scholarship program.

Saban was selected coach of the year by the venerable Walter Camp Foundation of New Haven, Connecticut. The organization's award is selected by vote of the nation's 119 Bowl Subdivision head coaches and sports information directors.

Saban is the second Alabama coach to earn the honor, joining Gene Stallings, who won in 1992.

Saban was also named Southeastern Conference Coach of the Year and was selected by *The Sporting News* and Home Depot for national honors.

Although Andre Smith disappointed Alabama fans when he was suspended for the Sugar Bowl game and then elected to enter the NFL draft, passing up his final year of eligibility at Bama, no one could be disappointed by the play Smith gave the Crimson Tide for three years. For his performance, he was given the Outland Award, presented annually to college football's best offensive lineman or linebacker. He won over finalists Duke Robinson of Oklahoma and Michael Oher of Ole Miss. He is the second Alabama winner of the award. Chris Samuels won in 1999.

Smith said, "I think it helped to play on a dominating offensive line like we had, that opened up holes for our running game."

Smith was named first team All-America by the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA), the Football Writers Association of America (FWAA), *The Sporting News* and the Walter Camp Foundation. In addition, he was a unanimous first-team All-SEC selection by the Associated Press, *The Sporting News*, SEC head

Continued on page 33

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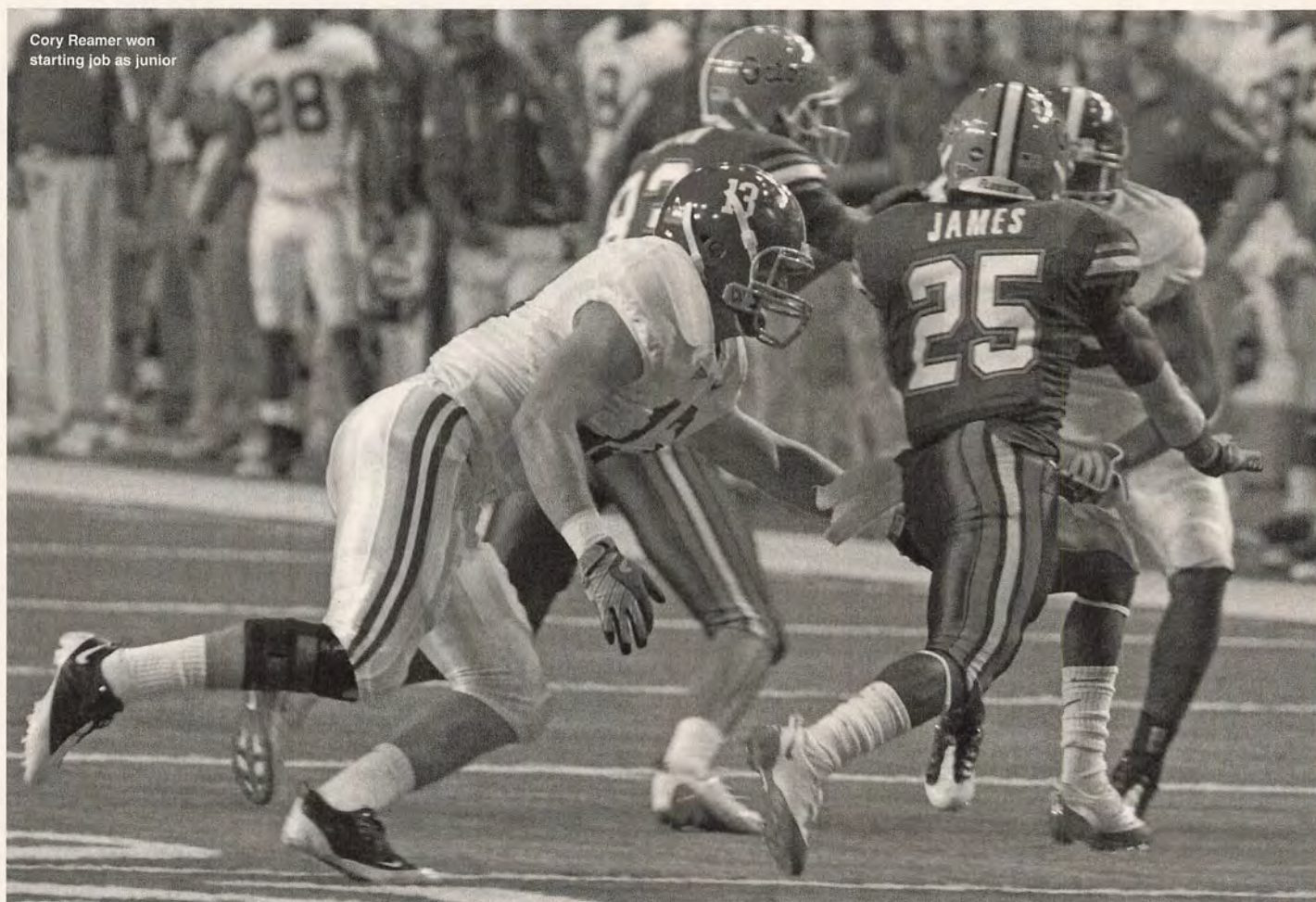
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High Aspirations

Reamer not happy with ending to 2008



Cory Reamer won starting job as junior

Stuart McNair

The 2008 football season did not end like Cory Reamer and his Alabama teammates wanted it too, as the Tide closed with losses to Florida in the Southeastern Conference title game and Utah in the Sugar Bowl. Its tough to enter an off-season on such a note, but Reamer feels it can be a motivator to do something Bama Coach Nick Saban emphasizes: finish.

Finish the drill, finish the play, and finish the game.

"When we lost the SEC championship, we really wanted to come in here and get a win, to send these seniors out on a good note," said Reamer just after the Sugar Bowl loss. "We've got to learn how to bounce back (from adversity), and be ready for that next year." Reamer called the season-ending losses "a big motivation. We want to get back here. We don't want this to be our only chance at a BCS

(bowl) or national championship game. It's a big motivation for us to work even harder in the off-season, to make sure we're a better team next year, so we don't make the same mistakes we did."

Reamer started 11 and played in all 14 games, and compiled 35 tackles, six for minus yardage. He forced one fumble, had one sack, and one quarterback hurry.

Reamer is a guy who likes to finish what he starts. He won state titles at Hoover, Iron Bowl this past season, and the SEC West, but he knows Alabama fans expect more. So does Reamer.

"I am a four year guy and will graduate this May," said Reamer. "I know what this place means to so many people. The Bryant Museum. The concrete at Denny Chimes. The respect for the coaches, teammates and fans. It's time to hang another banner, that 13th

one. Legacy. New Era. The sheer greatness that is Alabama. The coaches and these players want to do something special here and I want to be part of it. Heck, we all we want to be part of it."

No fan of two-time defending state football champion Prattville High School will ever forget Cory Reamer. Reamer was playing for Hoover High when the Lions came to Birmingham in December of 2004 looking for another Alabama 6A title. Reamer earned MVP honors with five tackles, two blocked punts, including a touchdown return, and an interception in Hoover's win in the title game.

During that senior year for the Bucs, Reamer made an incredible 92 tackles, had three sacks, the aforementioned two blocked punts, and seven interceptions as a linebacker. He was a linebacker his senior season, converting from the safety position he had played as a sophomore and junior for Hoover Coach Rush Propst.

The championship game performance caught the eye of then-Alabama Coach Mike Shula, and allowed Reamer to realize a dream. After a brief recruiting process, Reamer committed to the Crimson Tide. He said he had always wanted to wear the crimson and white.

He also had an offer from Auburn, and was recruited by Gene Chizik, then defensive coordinator and newly-appointed AU head coach. That was no surprise. Auburn had good reason to believe it could land Reamer.

Scott Moore, the well-known radio personality, writes occasionally for the website, BamaMag.com. Last summer Moore interviewed Cory's father, Curt, and learned that orange and blue had been the colors of choice in the Reamer household.

"We were definitely Auburn; most of our family went there," said Curt Reamer. "Cory was surrounded by Auburn fans for most of his life." But after a visit to Auburn in his prep junior year, Cory Reamer made a startling revelation to his father on the drive home. "Dad," he said, "I believe I am going to look great in Crimson and White."

"I wanted him to be happy and go where he felt most comfortable," Curt Reamer said. "I was thrilled that my son was going to play major college football. And Alabama is Alabama."

Cory Reamer was a tad bit anxious about the feelings of his family when Auburn offered. "Coach Chizik told me I reminded him of Will Herring, a former Tiger and current NFL safety turned linebacker. When Auburn offered I told my dad, 'I was way too scared to tell you.'"

Curt Reamer added "I think Cory was afraid we were going to try to persuade him to attend Auburn. I told him from day one it was his decision. We couldn't be more happy or proud for Cory."

The folks back in Hoover, just a 45-minute drive from Tuscaloosa, have noticed. "They don't have to put any extra pressure on me," Reamer said, "They know how big a position it is." And there are advantages to going to college that close to your home.

For instance, he said, "It's been a blast coming here, 30 miles from home, and I try to take advantage of it. Home cooked meals and Mom sometimes meets me at the Mercedes Benz plant (between Tuscaloosa and Birmingham) with some great home cooking. My sister is here now and in a sorority and my parents can be down here in no time. And they really love it as much as we do. I knew the day I stepped on campus this was where I wanted to be."

One thing that helped Reamer when he arrived at The Capstone was having his old high school quarterback around. "I was never as scared in my life as I was the first day (of practice)," he said. "I look



Stuart McNair

over and see this beast wearing number 47 and I thought to myself, I need to make friends with that guy immediately." That beast was NFL draft pick Mark Anderson. "Here I am, a 195-pound freshman and we have these guys that were unreal. Demeco Ryans, Freddie Roach and Roman Harper were incredible leaders. I am number 13 and dress beside number 14, who is (ex-Hoover teammate) John Parker Wilson, and I am thinking to myself, 'Welcome to the SEC,' and I haven't even been hit yet."

As he had in high school, Reamer began his college career as a safety.

As a true freshman in 2005, Reamer played in the first five games of the season before suffering a season-ending knee injury. His luck was no better in 2006. In fact, it was worse. Reamer was injured again, and only appeared in the first two games before missing the remainder of the season. Knee injuries did him in both seasons.

Reamer, was granted a medical redshirt for 2006, and he used the time to put a greater focus on academics. That time was well-spent, and it led to Academic All-SEC honors.

Like many of his teammates, Reamer seemed to benefit from the arrival of Nick Saban prior to the 2007 season. The redshirt sophomore had moved from safety to linebacker, and for the first time in his career, Reamer played in all 13 games, mainly on kick coverage. He did see action at linebacker against Western Carolina.

A game Tide fans would like to forget was memorable for Reamer: the loss to Louisiana-Monroe. Reamer was a terror on returns that afternoon, and made three 3 knock-down blocks. Saban and his staff noticed this during film review, and gave Reamer UA Special Teams Co-Player of the Week.

Playing time was there to be had heading into Reamer's junior year. The 6-4, 235-pounder had a solid spring, and made a

splash with six solo tackles, a pair of quarterback hurries, and a pass break-up in the A-Day game.

Would he be able to make the same move at Bama he made at Hoover, from safety to linebacker, and actually see quality time on defense? "If you think you're a linebacker," he said, "you can play like a linebacker," he said.

"I've always been a guy who was on special teams, contributing in some way," said Reamer. "You always want to be the guy who plays on defense. I'm just enjoying the opportunity to be there (in the starting lineup)."

The question heading into fall camp was: which linebacker slot would Reamer fill? It was apparent to observers that he would be somewhere in the starting line-up. Reamer finished spring camp at weakside linebacker, but began in the August heat to work more with the outside linebackers, mostly at the strongside position. He fought off all challengers, including highly-regarded signee Jerrell Harris, to claim the 'Sam' (strongside) linebacker spot by the time Bama boarded the buses for Atlanta to take on Clemson at the Georgia Dome to open the season.

"Coming back from injury to where you feel comfortable playing again, it's been great," Reamer said. "We did a lot of moving around, and I finally ended up at the 'Sam' spot. Who knows if I'll be staying there? That's always a joke in the meeting room."

"He's a good pass defender, because he has defensive back skills," Saban said. "He's very smart, and he can read patterns. The thing we've been working with him on is gap fits, being physical, being a good tackler and that's the biggest transition any safety would have, moving closer to the line of scrimmage." Saban has said in interviews that the weakside ("Will") linebacker spot is tougher to learn than strongside. Reamer made himself more valuable by learning both, which led to his break-out season of 2008, a year in which he helped his Crimson Tide to a 12-0 start, five weeks at the top spot in the polls, and a trip to New Orleans for the Sugar Bowl.

Heading into the spring, Harris, now much-improved after a season on Tide special teams and spot duty backing up Reamer, is ready again to challenge the rising senior.

"That's just part of it," Reamer said. "We're going to

compete. Nobody knows how that'll end up. We're not going to worry about it. It'll make us both better."

As a fellow-former safety, Reamer has an appreciation for the career his current defensive coordinator, Kirby Smart, had while patrolling the secondary for Georgia, where Smart played for former Alabama defensive coordinator Joe Kines. Reamer says Smart still has the same energy and intensity that made him a successful player, even when he wore the different-looking facemasks in high school that crack his current players up when they see film of Smart during his playing days.

"When (Smart) does drills out there, you can tell, he's real athletic," said Reamer. "My grandmother is a Georgia fan, she knew who he was."

Someday, someone else will see film of an Alabama linebacker wearing No. 13, and they, too, will know who he was. For now, with one more season left in crimson, Reamer likes the direction the Tide program is heading. Discipline is back, and players are buying into and become a part of what Saban terms "The Process."

"Team is first here now," Reamer said. "Our peer group handles the issues that are important. If you want to mess up, then you are going to have to face the music. Sometimes it is more difficult to face your peers than your coaches. No one wants to deal with that

kind of pressure in front of 15 other teammates. Good positive peer pressure from every age group, a handful from each class. It's how the core of great leadership is developed. We had it when I got here and then we lost it for a little while. Now guys are emerging everywhere. Rashad (Johnson) and Antoine (Caldwell) and John Parker were great senior leaders. They do things right everyday on and off the field. Then you have a young guy that makes a huge impact like (fellow linebacker) Rolando McClain. Those guys are great football players but even better people.

"Coach Saban is bringing this program back where it needs to be," Reamer said. "This is an elite place in an elite conference. Is it coincidence that the SEC has won the last three national titles? This is a time for restoration. The leadership on this team is now coming back to the forefront. This is a program everyone wants to be a part of. We went 7-6 last year, and 12-2 this year. The downward spiral is over. Things are changing in a very positive manner." ■



Stuart McNair

Lane Kiffin is new head coach at Tennessee

FOOTBALL BY MITCH DOBBS



New Blood

Coaching changes mark 2008 SEC football

University of Tennessee

Generally, when a team hits a downward skid, that team's coach and the program's supporters who want him fired engage in a war of words over what the imperiled program needs. Does the team need continuity or does it need change? Commitment to the current program or a new way of thinking? Experienced leadership or new blood? Loyalty to the coach or loyalty to winning?

New blood won out at the end the 2008 college football season, at least in the case of three Southeastern Conference schools which each made a head-coaching change following the season. With these changes at Tennessee, Auburn and Mississippi state, 36 years of collective SEC head coaching experience went out the window.

Veteran SEC coaches Phillip Fulmer and Tommy Tuberville were sent packing, as was relative newcomer Sylvester Croom. There may be semantics debate regarding whether these men were fired or resigned, but clearly none had other jobs lined up when their departures were announced. All three were forced out.

Even though all three of the fired coaches suffered losses to Alabama in 2008, Tide Head Coach Nick Saban is a member of the same coaching fraternity as those fired. He was none too pleased at what he saw as unjustified firings. After learning of Tuberville's departure Saban began his post-practice comment with some unsolicited thoughts on the moves in the league.

"Nobody's ever satisfied," Saban said. "When you see a program start to lose toughness, discipline, those types of things,

that's one thing. That's not the case (at Auburn). It wasn't the case at Tennessee. It wasn't the case at Mississippi State. It wasn't the case anywhere."

Of course, nobody ever being "satisfied" is a two-way street. It's not a quality limited just to athletics administrators driven to win. There are endless examples of coaches slipping out the back door to greener pastures shortly after making long-term public commitments to a school. Alabama fans are most familiar with Dennis Franchione's unsavory escape tactics, but the same criticism could fairly be leveled at Gene Chizik (spurning Iowa State for Auburn), Bobby Petrino (leaving the Falcons after one year for Arkansas), Tuberville ("The only way I'm leaving Ole Miss is in a pine box.") and Saban himself (as he admitted) among countless others.

Saban has been lambasted for saying he wouldn't take the Alabama job and then doing so after just two years coaching at the Miami Dolphins. He acknowledged his own situation in discussing the role money plays in hiring and firing decisions during a pre-Sugar Bowl press conference. A lack of loyalty from institutions to coaches and vice versa, Saban said, has "really become part of the business. And you can make a good case that I'm as guilty as anybody. But in that (the business aspect of sports) lies what you see."

Saban, being an experienced, seasoned member of the coaching

fraternity, boasted the virtues of continuity within a football program in defending the ousted coaches.

"The importance of the relationship you develop with those players in terms of developing them as players and helping them as players—the things I talk about all the time—when you make coaching changes that really disrupts that," he said. "I'd like to see a little bit more loyalty demonstrated and appreciation for what they had accomplished over a number of years and the entire body of work. But that's not my decision."

But youth is predictably way ahead of experience among the new coaches in the league. Tennessee's new coach was three years away from being born when Fulmer began his coaching career as a Tennessee assistant. Lane Kiffin was born on May 9, 1975, making him 33 years old when he was hired at UT. Fulmer, on the other hand, began his coaching career in 1972.

Before coming to Tennessee Kiffin had a cup of tea as head coach of the NFL's Oakland Raiders before being promptly fired by owner Al Davis. (How's that for loyalty?) Kiffin was Southern Cal's offensive coordinator prior to the Raiders job. At his introduction Kiffin said his coaching was influenced by Jim Sweeney and Pat Hill (former and current head coach at Fresno State), Jeff Tedford (now Cal's head coach), Tom Coughlin (now of the New York Giants), Dom Capers (now Patriots defensive coach) and Pete Carroll (USC's head coach).

"I'm really looking forward to embracing some of the great traditions at the University of Tennessee," Kiffin said. "For instance the Vol Walk, running through the T, singing Rocky Top all night long after we beat Florida next year. It will be a blast."

Meanwhile, at Auburn, it was all about the blueprint. The blueprint was mentioned six times during the new coach's introductory press conference. It's the same blueprint the former Auburn defensive coordinator (who left to be an assistant at Texas

before getting a head-coaching job at Iowa State) used to go 5-19 in two years in Ames, Iowa.

"I get the Auburn people and the Auburn way," Chizik said. "I had a blueprint in place for what we were going to do (at Iowa State) and I knew it was going to take time. I put that blueprint into effect, and I never deviated off it one bit."

According to the new coach, not much will change from his Iowa State days. "I don't think you have to change plans from school to school," he said. "You have to stay on track and keep grinding it out and do the same things you know work from past experiences."

Auburn Athletics Director Jay Jacobs saw the blueprint, and he was impressed.

"He presented us with a blueprint of Auburn football and part of that blueprint was that he shared our goal of competing and winning championships," Jacobs said. "He also shared our goal of developing these young men academically, spiritually and socially. That fits perfectly with the goals of the people here at Auburn."

(Advice to Auburn: Put the blueprint in a fireproof safe, not a brief case.)

The other coaching move in the SEC following the 2008 season was Sylvester Croom leaving Mississippi State. Croom served five years at Mississippi State before his departure, and was replaced by Florida Offensive Coordinator Dan Mullen. Mullen attempted to balance his new job and his old job through the January 8 BCS Championship Game. Mullen was reportedly making recruiting calls for Mississippi State while working on Florida's game plan for Oklahoma.

At print time of this article the coaching changes' impact on recruiting had yet to finalize themselves, but at least early it appeared that Mississippi State might benefit most from its change while Auburn would take the biggest hit.

Andrew Bone, Scout.com Southeast assistant regional manager, said that Mullen "has probably been the best hire so far on the recruiting front."

"A few of State's commitments plan to take visits," Bone said, "but the hire created a buzz among Magnolia State prospects who were in Mobile for the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic. Mullen also appears to have gotten the attention of four-star wide receiver Chad Bumphis."

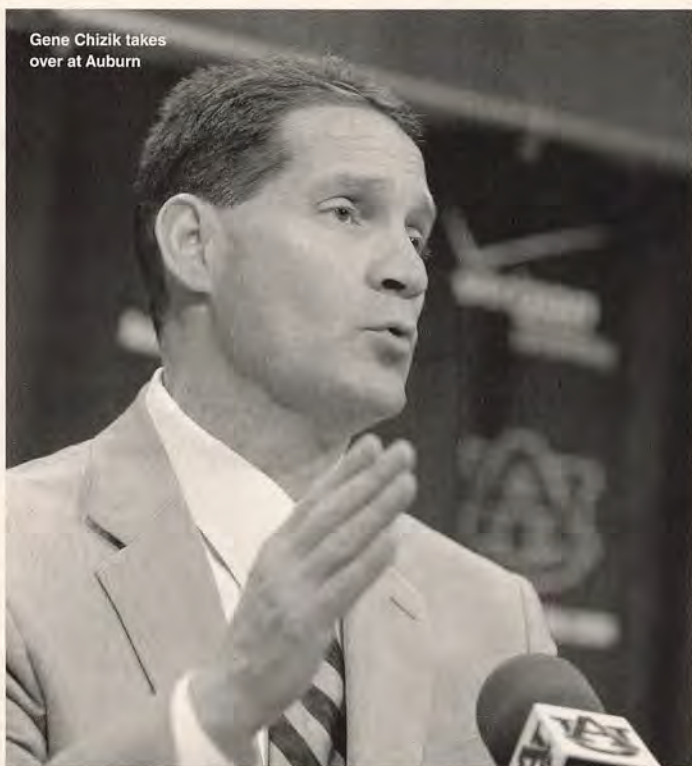
Tennessee, Bone said, dropped five-star quarterback Tajh Boyd from its commit list, but added one of the state's top players in Eric Gordon.

Auburn "suffered tremendously" in the wake of its coaching moves, Bone said. "Several players have decommitted including three of their top four defensive recruits. The quarterback commitment, Raymond Cotton, decommitted as well."

Change Is Inevitable

Changing football coaches is nothing new to the SEC, and three coaching changes within the conference in the same year is not unprecedented in recent times. After 2004 three new coaches were named: Les Miles at LSU, Urban Meyer at Florida, and Ed Ogeron at Ole Miss. Results have varied. Miles and Meyer have both won national championships and Ogeron has gotten fired.

After the 2000 season three new coaches entered the league together: Dennis Franchione at Alabama, Mark Richt at Georgia and



Gene Chizik takes over at Auburn

AUTigers.com

Guy Morriss at Kentucky. None won national championships and only Richt remains with the same school.

In fact, years in which there are no head coaching changes are what are truly odd in SEC football. That has only happened once this century, when every SEC coach returned after 2005 to start the 2006 season.

All the recent coaching moves left Georgia's Richt as the "Dean of Coaches" in the SEC; a term frequently used to describe the coach who has been in charge the longest at his current school. Fulmer had held the "Dean" title before being bounced at Tennessee.

What does it mean to be "The Dean"? It may get you a seat at the head of the table at the SEC coaches meetings in Destin, Florida, or dubs at the front of the buffet line, but in terms of job security, being "The Dean" probably just means that it's more likely that you'll be the next one to leave. Being Dean does mean you've had at least some staying power, however. Before Fulmer was Dean, Steve Spurrier held the symbolic title at Florida. Other past deans include Ray Goff (Georgia), Billy Brewer (Ole Miss), Pat Dye (Auburn), Johnny Majors (Tennessee), Vince Dooley (Georgia) and Paul "Bear" Bryant (Alabama).

Spurrier currently holds the title of having the most SEC head-coaching experience of any coach in the league with 16 years, but he is tied for fourth in terms of most years at his current school (with Miles of LSU and Meyer of Florida). Ole Miss's Houston Nutt, formerly of Arkansas, is the only other active SEC coach with double-digit years in SEC head coaching experience. Tommy Tuberville coached Auburn for ten seasons before being ousted (or resigning, if you believe the official line) and had four years experience at Ole Miss for a total of 14 SEC head-coaching seasons.

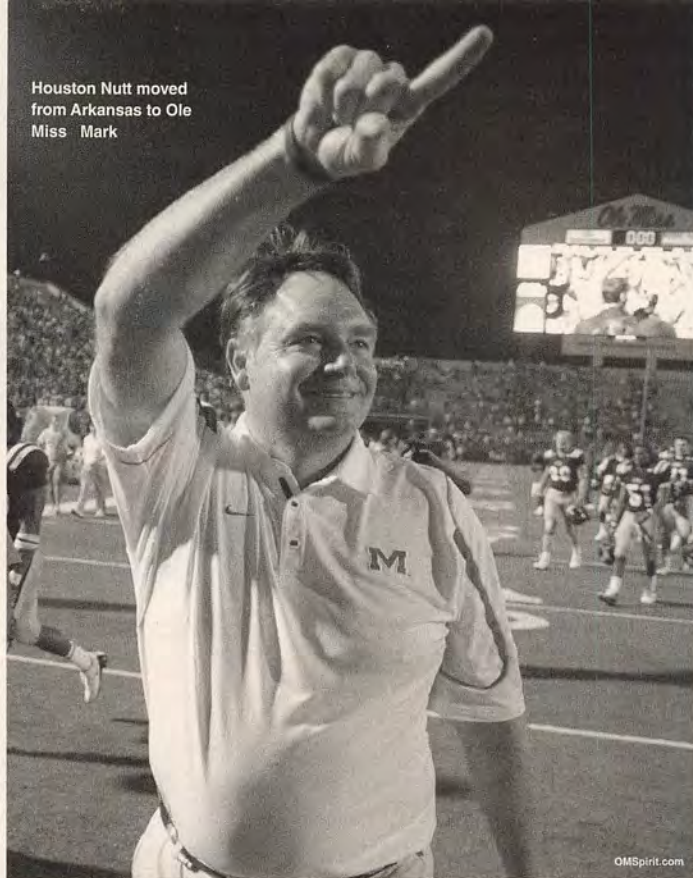
With just two seasons under his belt at Alabama, Saban already ranks seventh among SEC coaches for the longest tenure at his current school. Ole Miss, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi State and Auburn have all replaced head coaches since Saban's hire at Alabama.

Saban ranks tied for fourth with Vanderbilt's Bobby Johnson in terms of overall head coaching experience in the Conference. Of the three that out-rank Saban in that category, only Richt has amassed all his years at the same school.

The chart below lists coaches in the order of longest tenure at one's current school. Also listed are the total number of years coached in the SEC; three current coaches - Spurrier, Saban, Nutt (and formerly Tuberville of Auburn) - had previous stops in the SEC prior to the current job. ■

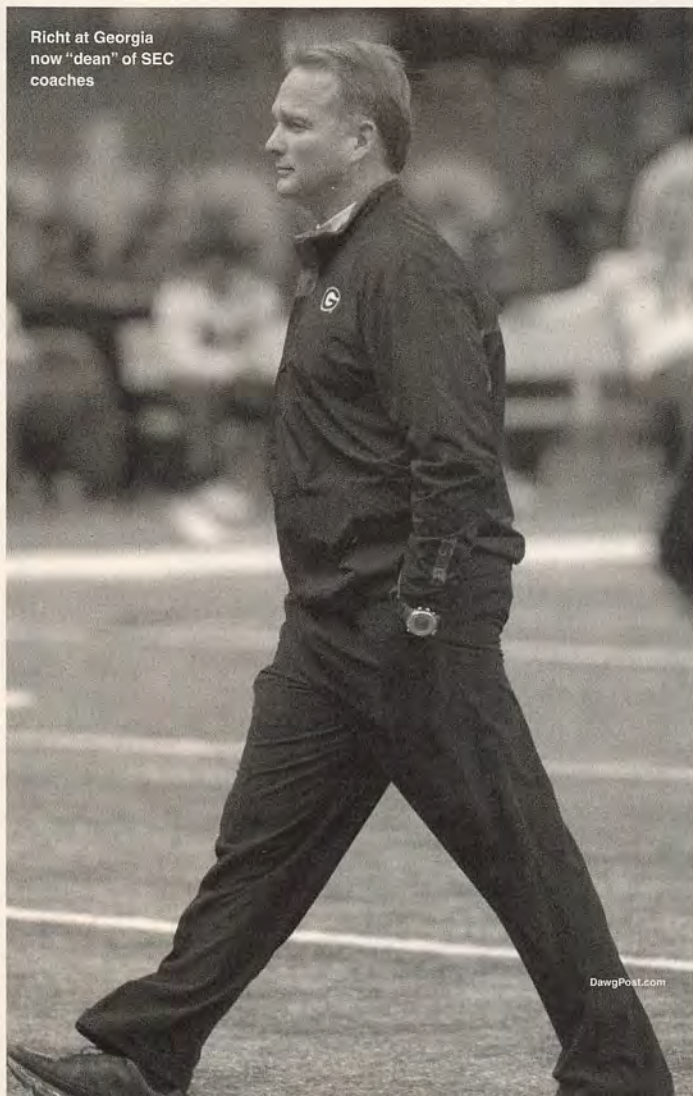
Team	Coach	Seasons at School	Seasons in SEC
Georgia	Mark Richt	8	8
Vanderbilt	Bobby Johnson	7	7
Kentucky	Rich Brooks	6	6
South Carolina	Steve Spurrier	4	16 (Florida)
LSU	Les Miles	4	4
Florida	Urban Meyer	4	4
Alabama	Nick Saban	2	7 (LSU)
Ole Miss	Houston Nutt	1	11 (Arkansas)
Arkansas	Bobby Petrino	1	1
Tennessee	Lane Kiffin	0	0
Mississippi State	Dan Mullen	0	0
Auburn	Gene Chizik	0	0

Houston Nutt moved from Arkansas to Ole Miss Mark



OMSpirit.com

Richt at Georgia now "dean" of SEC coaches



DawgPost.com

GOLF BY KIRK McNAIR

Contenders

Men's and women's teams national powers

An old joke has it that a track coach's job is pretty easy. He tells the runners to keep turning left and "get back as quick as you can." The successful coach, though, has to have fast runners.

In college golf it would seem simple enough. Get the best players possible and when they shoot low rounds the job has been done. Many years ago the golf coach at a Southeastern Conference school said his job was to get the players to the tournament and make sure they had new golf balls.

"True enough," said Alabama Men's Golf Coach Jay Seawell. "It's a mathematical game. My job is in preparation and in motivation. When we get to a tournament, it's the players' time."

"I'm a glorified bus driver." Seawell is overly modest.

In recent years, men's and women's golf has made huge strides at Alabama. Part of it is the commitment to facilities made by Crimson Tide Athletics Director Mal Moore.

But great credit has to go to the coaches, Seawell for the men's team and Mic Potter for the women's squad. Both came to Alabama with strong credentials and neither has been a disappointment.

It shows in the national rankings. Going into the spring season, Seawell's Crimson Tide

Matthew Swan leads
Alabama men's golf

University of Alabama

men's team is ranked third in the nation. Potter's Bama women's team is ranked fifth in the nation.

Alabama's men's team spent much of last season ranked first in the nation. Bama won the 2008 Southeastern Conference championship. Still, the Tide's lofty ranking going into this year is something of a surprise. Gone from that 2008 squad is one of the nation's finest amateur golfers, Michael Thompson. Other seniors on that team included Joseph Sykora, now playing on the Nationwide professional tour, and Mark Harrell.

Last fall the members of the 1979 Alabama golf team that won the SEC championship played an exhibition match against members of the 2008 team. (The older fellows played from tee boxes that made the course slightly shorter.) Both teams shot 292.

But a side match going on, one that helps explain Bama's continued success, was the team made up of Alabama freshmen golfers. That squad shot 64.

Only two veterans return from the 2008 team. Matthew Swan, a senior from Montgomery, went from being the youngest player for Bama through most of his first three years to being the leader as a senior.

"It's a little different because it happened so quick," Swan said. "I'm in a different role because we have so many young guys and they call on me the way I called on older guys. Last year we had a bunch of older guys who knew the ropes, knew what to do. We had never been one of the top teams in the nation, but they were experienced and the building process came together.

"I came here because of Coach Seawell and what he told me he could do. It's been fun to see it play out the way he said it would."

Swan doesn't see a fall off this year.

"We've brought new guys into a top program," he said. "They are all real accomplished and have already done a lot in golf. They knew how to play and how to win.

"I think it surprised some people with what we did in the fall when many thought it would be a rebuilding year for Alabama."

Alabama had an excellent fall season, particularly the finish. In the final fall match at Central Florida's Isleworth Collegiate, the Crimson Tide finished ahead of five other top ten teams en route to a second place finish behind number one ranked Georgia. Oklahoma State is number two in pre-spring national rankings, Southern Cal fourth behind the Tide, and Stanford fifth.

As always, the SEC will be top competition. In addition to Georgia and Alabama, league teams include Arkansas at number nine, Florida 12, South Carolina 14, and Tennessee 16. "It's the best conference in the nation," Seawell said. "We'll have 10 or 11 teams in the NCAA Tournament."

Alabama had one win in the fall, taking the championship of the Jerry Pate National Intercollegiate at Birmingham's Old Overton Club.

Bama was to open its spring season February 22 at the John Hayt Collegiate at Sawgrass Country Club in Jacksonville, Florida.

Seawell said, "It's probably a rebuilding year, but the guys we recruited are good players. You never know how freshmen will do in college golf, but in the fall our guys stepped in and embraced it and played well.

"And Matthew has stepped in as a leader and relishes the role.

He's setting a great example and playing better."

Swan has been a regular for three years and has an impressive resume that includes three United States Amateur appearances. But he's not Bama's only senior. Matt Hughes of Dalton, Georgia, was also in the U.S. Amateur, playing in 2007, and last year played on the Tide's SEC and NCAA squads at the number five spot. In the fall he played at number two, which Seawell said "may have put too much pressure on his game."

Although golf is an individual game, it is a team sport in college. One job of the coach is to put his players in the correct spot.

"A guy has to be comfortable," Seawell said. "The expectations for the man playing number one is different than it is for the man playing number five. Number one has to play well every round. Ideally at number five you have a man who thinks he's a number one."

Much of the attention is on Alabama's freshman class.

"Bud Cauley is the one who stood out the most," Seawell said. "To use a football term, he's a five-star recruit. He has the potential



University of Alabama

Alabama Men's Golf Coach Jay Seawell



University of Alabama

to be an All-America as a freshman. He and Matthew are the reason we're ranked so high." Cauley came to Bama from Jacksonville, Florida, with international credentials.

One freshman got a head start by arriving at Alabama last winter and being redshirted last spring. He participated in every fall tournament and shot 64 in that exhibition match with the two Bama SEC championship teams. Hamrick, who is from Montgomery, played in every match in the fall and, Seawell, said, "got better every week."

Seawell said Hamrick "is the key. We need for him to give us a solid score in every round. I think he's going to be an All-America."

Seawell didn't have to go far to get another top freshman. Hunter Slatton, 6-5, is from Tuscaloosa. He had an outstanding high school career and Seawell said "he is a great competitor."

Spencer Cole, a redshirt freshman from Bradenton, Florida, "potentially, should be a number one or number two, but he hasn't put it together yet," Seawell said. "He got better as the fall went on. If he plays to his potential, we'll be a national championship competitor."

Another Tuscaloosa product is a redshirt freshman and Slatton's former teammate at Northridge High School. Phillip Weaver, said Seawell, "is a gutsy guy who finds a way. He needs to be more consistent, but when he plays I'm confident he's going to get the job done."

Seawell is again assisted by Scott Limbaugh. His student assistant coach this year is former Bama golfer Gator Todd.

One thing both the men's and women's teams have in common is playing a competitive schedule. "We'll have played against all the top teams in the country by the time we get to the NCAA Tournament," Seawell said. "It's not a matter of 'we heard' who is good. We'll know who is good."

"Everyone would like to play a tough schedule," Alabama Women's Coach Mic Potter said. "But it's based on your record. We've played our way into the premier invitations; invitations we hadn't gotten before. Now we've reached the point where we can pick and choose, which means we can have the pace we want for practice and tournaments."

"I think the biggest thing is that we had some good tournaments where we were paired with best teams in country, and the girls learned that we're as good as anybody we play," he said. "We went against a team like UCLA or Duke or USC, who won the national championship, and when we play with them we know we can compete with them. But you've got to believe that. Our experience last year put us in a position where we know we can do that and we're not intimidated anymore when we're able to go head-to-head against them."

Potter is not surprised at Alabama's high ranking. "We thought we'd be good," he said. "In women's college golf it often comes down to depth; not so much that the top three played well, but how the four and five played."

"Last fall we had a player, Brooke Pancake, get sick at a match. We only had six players so we had to count the five remaining. Laura Goodwin stepped in and shot 148 and tied for sixth. So depth is our biggest attribute."

"But we're pretty solid in the top three, too," Potter said.

The coach said, "We haven't played our best yet. We haven't had a tournament where I thought we played really well. We've played well in spots, but we're capable of being a lot better."

That would be very good, indeed. Alabama has beaten every

Alabama Women's Golf
Coach Mic Potter



University of Alabama

top team in the nation except UCLA and Arizona State, who are considered to be the two strongest teams in women's college golf.

Although senior Kathleen Ekey didn't have the lowest fall score (by a fraction of a stroke), there is no doubt the honorable mention All-America is the Tide's leader. After transferring to Bama from Furman (where she had been recruited by Potter before he came to Alabama), she set the Alabama records for average score for a season (73.3) and the Alabama tournament record, a minus 13 in the Crimson Tide Classic that included a school record 65. She was All-SEC.

"Kathleen had a round or two over par," Potter said. "She was that close to really playing well. It always comes down to putting for her because she has distance and accuracy."

Ekey, from Wadsworth, Ohio, made an appearance in the LPGA's U.S. Open, competing as one of 27 amateurs in the field. In *GolfWorld's* 2008-09 preseason College Coaches' Poll, Ekey was named one of the top 50 female "Players to Watch."

"She definitely has the ability and the experience, and included in that are playing in U.S. Open and the U.S. Amateur, which she should be able to build on," Potter said. "I expect great things from her, and she expects great things from herself. It's a matter of her being able to keep pressure off and concentrate on the task at hand, which is to do her best on every shot."

Ekey said, "We're ranked high, but not high enough. We're aiming for number one. I suppose some people are surprised that Alabama golf is a national power, but we're not at all surprised. And we're not content. My teammates and I are working hard every day to be better."

She said that being able to come to Alabama is "a wonderful opportunity. I am so happy I had this experience, great coaches and great people around us. That's a big part of why we've come so far in just a couple of years. Mic has been doing this for a long time and has a lot of experience. He knows what he's looking for. He wants good players, good students, good people—the total package. That's why he's been able to turn this program around so quickly."

She said that everyone involved in the program has contributed to "a great atmosphere that leads to success."

She is also pleased that Alabama plays a competitive schedule against the nation's best teams and best players.

Sophomore Camilla Lennarth led the team in scoring during the fall with 73.08 average per 18 holes. "Camilla is a Swedish National Team player, so it's not a surprise that she's good," Potter said. "She's going to keep getting better and better. She is capable of being a dominating player."

Potter said the biggest surprise of the fall was freshman Brooke Pancake of Chattanooga, who had two top ten finishes. "She shot over 74 only two times, a 76 and a 77," Potter said. "She puts the ball around the green and doesn't make mistakes."

Another Swedish player is junior Helena Blomberg. "Helena has played every tournament and in spots has done well," Potter said. "She is a good player who has been pretty consistent."

Rhea Nair had Alabama's third-best scoring average last year as a sophomore, despite what Potter called "a little slump at the end of the season." She had a bout with tendonitis in her wrist in the fall, but the coach expects the native of Dubai to play her way into the top five.

Sophomore Courtney Harter of Clearwater, Florida, had the team's best round in fall play, a 67 in Charleston. "She's very

capable," Potter said. She is as talented as any, but needs to produce those rounds more often, have more consistency."

Potter said, "We have seven who are very capable of playing at this level.

"I think we can be very good. I've always thought that having depth and a lot of competition on the team is a good thing, and we have plenty of that. We have girls battling for a spot just to get in tournaments and that just makes them better. We have more competition than in the past, and I feel like we're a better, more experienced team than last year. Obviously the more you can use that to your advantage the better off you'll be."

Bama was 12th in the NCAA championships last year. The Tide has improved its NCAA ranking each year under Potter.

As for the conference, Potter said the SEC will be strong with Georgia, Florida, Auburn, LSU, Vanderbilt and Ole Miss all expected to be good and South Carolina having the advantage of the SEC Tournament on its home course.

"But we're the highest ranked team in the SEC," Potter reminded.

Alabama opens up the spring season at the University of Central Florida Invitational in Sorrento March 8-10.

University of Alabama Golf Rosters

2009 Alabama Men's Golf Roster

Name	Hgt.	Year	Hometown (Last School)
Bud Cauley	5-6	Fr	Jacksonville, Fla. (home)
Spencer Cole	5-11	Fr	Bradenton, Fla. (The Pendleton School)
Hunter Hamrick	5-9	Fr	Montgomery (Montgomery Academy)
Thomas Hughhins	6-1	Jr	Ponte Vedra, Fla. (Allen D. Nease)
Matt Hughes	6-1	Sr	Dalton, Ga. (Dalton)
Lee Knox	5-11	Fr	Augusta, Ga. (Augusta Day School)
Hunter Slatton	6-5	Fr	Tuscaloosa (Northridge)
Scott Strohmeier	6-3	Fr	Auburn (Auburn)
Matthew Swan	6-0	Sr	Montgomery (Trinity Presbyterian)
Phillip Weaver	6-1	Fr	Tuscaloosa (Northridge)

Head Coach: Jay Seawell • Assistant Coach: Scott Limbaugh • Volunteer: Gator Todd

2009 Alabama Women's Golf Roster

Name	Hgt.	Year	Hometown (Last School)
Helena Blomberg	5-8	Jr	Uppsala, Sweden (Bildningcentrum)
Kathleen Ekey	5-7	Sr	Wadsworth, Ohio (Furman University)
Laura Goodwin	5-6	Sr	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
Courtney Harter	5-6	Soph	Clearwater, Fla. (Palm Harbor University)
Camilla Lennarth	5-10	Soph	Stockholm, Sweden (Klippers)
Rhea Nair	5-4	Jr	Dubai, UAE (The Pendleton School)
Brooke Pancake	5-7	Fr	Chattanooga, Tenn. (Baylor)
Kelley VanDenburg	5-6	Soph	Brockport, N.Y. (Central)
Kristen Warhurst	5-5	Fr	Fairhope (St. Paul's)

Head Coach: Mic Potter • Assistant Coach: Susan Rosenstiel

Urgent Business

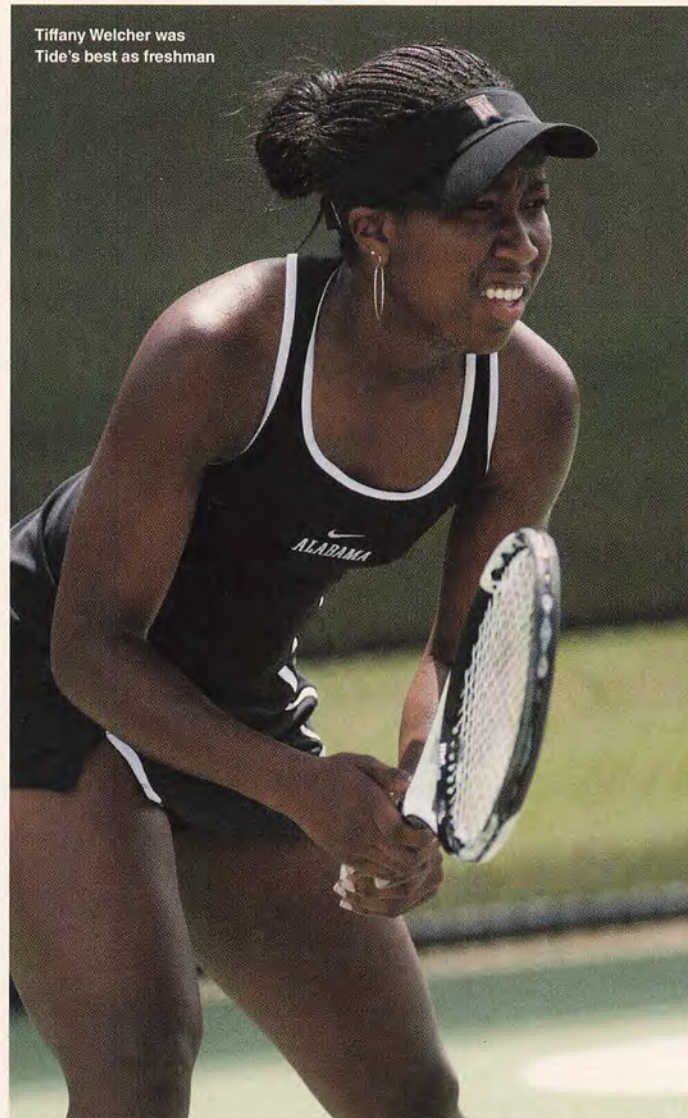
Tennis teams looking to make noise

As Alabama's men's and women's tennis teams look forward to the 2009 spring season, their goals are starkly different: one is rebuilding and aiming for a winning season, while the other has high expectations and top-10 aspirations. One team heads into the season in the top 25, boasting a veteran roster and high level of experience, while the other is unranked and riding the shoulders of its underclassmen.

Where Alabama's men's and women's teams stand heading into the spring may make for two very different outlooks, but despite the expectations of each team, the message from each of the Tide's coaches is the same; regardless of the objective, they say, urgency is needed.

The time for improvement is now.

"I feel like we could possibly have the deepest team in the history of our tennis program," said Alabama's Men's Tennis Coach Billy Pate, whose team is coming off an NCAA Tournament appearance. "We've got 13 guys who can all play. We've got a lot of



Tiffany Welcher was Tide's best as freshman

talent and a lot of experience, for once. We've had a younger team during a lot of my tenure here, but now we have an experienced group."

Women's Coach Jenny Mainz, whose team is coming off a six-win season, said that her group has embraced the theme as well.

"I think we could really be a surprise team," Mainz said. "I felt like we were a dangerous team last year. We were young and inexperienced. What we've gone through the last year or two, being close and being on the edge, we certainly have the potential now to contend in the SEC."

Mainz is leading an Alabama women's team that returns a wealth of experience from last year's squad, which includes two former freshmen who now find themselves in leadership positions. Tiffany Welcher, who seized the number one spot for the Tide in her first season last year, and Meritt Emery, who played most of the year at number four, are expected to be two of the Tide's biggest contributors in the starting six.

University of Alabama



Mathieu Thibaudeau leader of veteran men's tennis team

University of Alabama

Pairing their potential with the experience of juniors Paulina Bigos and Alice Tunaru, Mainz said, could give her team a dangerous lineup.

"We had a hole in our lineup last year, and the hole was at the top of the lineup," she said. "I'm convinced now that those three at the top are ready to really step it up. They know what's ahead. They're more prepared to jump in and not just compete, but excel."

New to the Alabama team this year are Courtney McLane, a Lawrenceville, Georgia, native, and Taylor Lindsay, a native of Birmingham. With "dynamic skills" and a desire to succeed, Mainz said, McLane and Lindsay will be given every opportunity to make an impact in both singles and doubles for Alabama this year.

The Tide's freshmen, coupled with the on-court experience of its veterans, could provide a healthy balance for the team as the group looks toward the NCAA Tournament.

"We certainly are a team that's incredibly capable and I think



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Alabama Women's Tennis Coach
Jenny Mainz



University of Alabama

Alabama Men's
Tennis Coach
Billy Pate



University of Alabama

the biggest thing is that we do the work and that we're not afraid of the work," Mainz said. "No one's taking shortcuts and calling in sick. The biggest thing is that they have to believe that they belong. I watch them every day so I see what they're capable of. I have all the confidence in the world in this team that we should be playing in May at the NCAA Tournament."

While Alabama's women are counting on a strong fall season to propel them into an improved spring, the Tide's men, meanwhile, have Pate convinced that the right mix of experience and talent is there to send the group deep into the NCAA Tournament. After falling last season in the first round to South Alabama, he said, the team is hungry for a better finish to 2009.

"[The South Alabama loss] was one of those matches where I feel like if we play it 10 times we win eight or nine of them, and it was just that day," Pate said. "But we re-evaluated what happened and how we're going to go forward. I think that left the team really hungry going into this year. There's a sense of urgency from the guys coming back."

When Pate took over the Alabama men's tennis team in 2003, his stated goal was to build a consistent program that would routinely find itself in the top 10 nationally while having a chance to compete for a national championship. Since that time, Pate has rebounded the Tide program from back-to-back 12th-place finishes in the SEC to consecutive years in the top half of the conference. After finishing third in the league in 2007, Alabama finished fifth last year.

This year's Alabama team brings a blend of both experienced veterans and highly touted newcomers, with a roster that features a balance of five seniors and five freshmen. Additionally, the Tide's roster is loaded with preseason nationally ranked players, including senior Mathieu Thibaudeau (69), freshman John Lewis (106) and senior Billy Mertz (115).

Perhaps no player may be more crucial to Alabama's resurgence than Mertz, a former number one player for the Tide who sat out last season with a medical redshirt. Mertz's return to the court and subsequent return to the Tide's starting six, Pate said, has brought an attitude and sense of urgency to the senior class, which views 2008 as its last chance to bring Alabama tennis to the forefront of the national discussion.

"I think with [Mertz] getting injured and having to go through that, and now he's just getting back, there's a new lease on life for him," Pate said. "He's a competitor, so he's like a caged animal right now. He's ready to get out and compete."

Such experience will be key this season for an Alabama lineup that, according to Pate, could be one of the strongest in the country in spots four through six. Also a strength for the team will be its doubles play, which includes the return of last year's 19th-ranked doubles team of Thibaudeau and Dan Buikema, which finished the season 29-12 and enters this season ranked 48th nationally.

Although last season ended in the 4-3 upset loss to South Alabama, the Tide scored major wins over nationally ranked programs along the way, including Pepperdine, Florida, LSU and Auburn.

Playing such a stiff out-of-conference slate, in addition to the rugged SEC schedule, does nothing but help his team as the season goes along, Pate said. This year, Alabama will face Clemson, Indiana

and Miami out of conference. In-conference, the Tide must deal with preseason number three Georgia, number eight Tennessee, number nine Ole Miss, number 10 Florida and number 19 LSU.

"Our goal has always been to win the national title, and if we weren't as good as we are then we wouldn't set such a lofty standard," Pate said. "We feel like we could achieve that. We've got a great schedule, and we've got all the resources necessary.

"I think the sky's the limit. I think we have a chance to do very well."

One aspect playing to the advantage of both teams is a fall season that gave each coach exactly what he or she was looking for out of Alabama's athletes. For Pate, it meant a chance to showcase the Tide's five freshmen, resting its veterans and trying to formulate an eight-man roster out of 13 SEC-caliber players.

For Mainz, it meant a chance to set enough short-term goals for her team to build confidence as the spring season approaches. With that in mind, it also provided a chance for Welcher to shine on the individual circuit, posting impressive tournament performances at venues including Milwaukee and Los Angeles.

Welcher's performances in the fall have vaulted her up the national rankings, and she enters the spring season for the Tide at number 72 nationally.

"She's going to lead the way at number one (in the Bama lineup) and I think she really has a lot of firepower to springboard into the spring because she had such a promising fall season and really stepped it up," Mainz said. "Last year she struggled a bit and is now a more complete player and is able to grab some matches this fall that she lost last fall."

Mainz's players know that the key to turning around Alabama's women's program begins with work and dedication, and the level of commitment shown by the team is enough to encourage the Alabama coach coming off a 6-15 season that ended on an eight-match losing streak.

The work, Mainz said, began long before the fall slate started—over the summer, instead of just working out on campus like normal, Alabama's players entered tournaments. Bigos, who will team with Welcher in doubles play, was one of the Alabama players that won an ITA summer event, knocking off three seeded college players along the way.

It continued throughout the fall, carrying over into Thanksgiving and Christmas break, when each of the girls made a commitment to be match-ready by January.

Heading into the start of the spring season, Mainz says, the pieces are there for the team to regain its spot atop the SEC West—a place the Tide hasn't been since 2006.

"The team is working tirelessly," she said. "We all know that we need to step it up and we really need to get it done and turn in some results. We're aware of that and I believe that this team is working very hard in that direction to make some things happen, to make a change and shake things up a little bit."

With just one senior on this year's roster, Shelley Godwin of Birmingham, and a group of players that Mainz knows is better for having endured a season of growth, there may be no better time to make a splash than now.

"We're not in the national rankings right now," Mainz said.

"We need to play with a chip on our shoulder because we have a lot to prove. We had a good team last year, but we have to make some things happen. We have the ability to be playing in May, undoubtedly. I feel confident that we are on the right track for those things to happen."

The door is just as open for Pate and the Alabama men. With back-to-back national champion Georgia losing the core of its team to graduation, Pate said, now is the chance for Alabama to make a move. Crucial to any momentum shift was the Tide's highly successful fall season, in which Alabama finished with 64 singles victories and 26 doubles wins—all while resting many of its top players.

"The strength of this team is in the depth and balance, and that continues to be the case," Pate said. "We're going to be good entering the season, starting off 23rd in the preseason rankings. It's a good ranking, but it's kind of where we ended last year. We have higher aspirations, guys who see ourselves as a top-10 caliber team. We've got a lot to prove and the next few months will dictate that."

University of Alabama Tennis Rosters

Men's Tennis Roster

Name	Hgt.	Class	Exp.	Hometown
Creighton Blanchard	6-0	Fr	HS	Orange Park, Fla.
Dan Buikema	6-5	Sr	3L	Battle Creek, Mich.
Michael Davis	6-1	Fr	HS	London, England
Ricky Doverspike	6-4	Fr	HS	Atlanta
Andrew Felsenthal	5-11	Sr	3L	Memphis
Michael Jung	5-11	Sr	1L	Atlanta
John Lewis	6-2	Fr	HS	Birmingham
Billy Mertz	6-0	Sr	3L	Silver Springs, Md.
Saketh Myneni	6-4	Jr	2L	Andhra Pradesh, India
Mathieu Thibaudeau	6-3	Sr	3L	St. Georges, Quebec
Michael Thompson	5-10	Fr	HS	Cape Town, South Africa
Trey Walston	5-11	Soph	1L	Birmingham
Houssam Yassine	6-0	Jr	2L	Rabat, Morocco

Head Coach: Billy Pate • Assistant Coach Bo Hodge • Volunteer: Paul Thoesen

Women's Tennis Roster

Name	Class	Hometown
Paulina Bigos	Jr	Krasnik, Poland
Meritt Emery	Soph	Lexington, Ky.
Shelley Godwin	Sr	Birmingham
Taylor Lindsey	Fr	Vestavia Hills
Courtney McLane	Fr	Lawrenceville, Ga.
Bianca Svensson	Jr	Atlanta
Alice Tunaru	Jr	Pitesti, Romania
Tiffany Welcher	Soph	Clarksville, Ind.

Head Coach: Jenny Mainz • Assistant: Rahim Esmail

Welcome Aboard

Women's basketball recruits in state

One of the items on the front burner for the NCAA is a proposal by college football coaches for an early signing period. It would be in December and enable colleges to sign up those football players who have made up their minds about their schools, eliminating the costly and time-consuming job of continuing to recruit players already committed.

For those wondering if a large number of college football prospects would opt for the earlier signing period instead of the signing period that begins the first Wednesday in February, look no further than almost all other sports.

For many years, winter and spring sports had a signing period that began in the spring. Then an early signing period was established for November. Alabama's coaches in winter and spring sports have basically completed recruiting. There may be a few additions when the spring signing period rolls around, but for the most part new athletes were signed in the one-week early period in November.

Earlier we reported on those signees in men's basketball, baseball, softball, gymnastics, men's tennis, women's golf, swimming and diving and one signee in volleyball.

Since then there have been announcements of three signees in women's basketball and two more additions in volleyball.

Alabama Women's Basketball Coach Wendell Hudson is in a rebuilding situation. It was interesting that when Hudson's coach at Alabama, C.M. Newton, came on the scene in the late 1960s, Newton determined that getting the best players in the state of Alabama would make the Crimson Tide competitive. Hudson believes that to be true in women's basketball. He had noticed that teams across the country were playing (and winning) with players from Alabama.

Hudson has added Karneshia Garrett from Hoover and Celiscia Farmer and Megham Perkins, both of Montgomery.

Karneshia Garrett, a 6-2 post player, plays for Hoover High School and also played for the Alabama Twisters club team and was a member of the 2006 Youth Games Gold Medal team. Prior to this season she played at Wenonah High School in Birmingham. She was most valuable player of the state regionals last season as she had a personal best game of 21 points, 20 rebounds and seven blocked shots.

Celiscia Farmer played at Robert E. Lee in Montgomery, but is now reported to be no longer on the team. She had been averaging 26.7 points and 8.4 rebounds per game. She had 43 points in a game against Elmore. As a junior she averaged 18.5 points and 6.5 rebounds per game and scored 25 or more points in seven games, including a high of 31 against Brewbaker Tech.

Megham Perkins, a 6-0 guard, had previously committed to Auburn, but switched and signed with the Crimson Tide. She began her prep career at Robert E. Lee in Montgomery, but now plays at Montgomery Carver. As a junior she was honorable mention all-state as she averaged 20.6 points and 10.7 rebounds per game. She had a high game of 35 points against Wetumpka. She scored over 30 points four times. Before

leaving Lee, she was averaging 17.4 points and 8.2 rebounds per game.

Alabama Volleyball Coach Judy Green previously had announced the signing of Kayla Fitterer of Edwardsville, Illinois. Since then, Bama has added the national junior college player of the year and Miss Volleyball in Kentucky to the Crimson Tide volleyball family.

Kayla Schmidt, who just finished her second season at Blinn College in Brenham, Texas, and Kelsey Anderson of Louisville, Kentucky, as the new Tide signees in volleyball.

Schmidt led the Blinn Buccaneers to the 2008 National Junior College championship. She has already entered The University.

"I'm excited about Kayla joining our program," said Green. "She brings a level of experience we are in great need of. That experience is going to be very beneficial to our team. She knows how to win at a high level

Schmidt brings quite an impressive list of accolades with her to The Capstone to go along with her national championship. She was named the 2008 American Volleyball Coaches Association Two-Year Colleges National Player of the Year and NJCAA National Player of the Year. In addition, the Bellville, Texas, native garnered Most Valuable Player honors in the national tournament and was named an AVCA First-Team All America.

For the 2008 season, Schmidt ranked third nationally in assists with an average of 11.69 per set. In addition, she added 1.51 digs and 1.21 kills with a hitting percentage of .375 per frame. In the championship match against Arkansas-Fort Smith, Schmidt tallied 65 assists and 19 digs.

Anderson, a 5-8 outside hitter/defensive specialist, was named the 2008 Kentucky State Player of the Year and earned the 2008 Miss Kentucky Volleyball crown. She made both the all-state and all-region teams as well as being named to the Berkeley Classic All-Tournament Team. Anderson's 2008 Mercy Academy squad went 40-1 en route to securing state championship honors. In addition, her high school team advanced to national competition and finished second in 2008.

"Kelsey is a winner in all aspects of her life," said Green. "She is a gifted athlete, student and person."

Statistically, Anderson had a stellar year finishing with 642 kills for an average of 15.6 per match. She hit .385 and was solid at the net totaling 57 blocks. In the back row, Anderson scooped up 205 digs and served up 83 aces.

As a member of the MidAmerican Volleyball Association club team, she earned Junior Volleyball Directors Association (JVDA) All-Tournament Team honors along with JVDA Showcase MVP distinction in 2008. In 2007, Anderson was an Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) All-America. The 2006 season was also good to her as she collected Junior Olympic All-America recognition, was named the AAU MVP, won the AAU championship and finished second for the 15 and under teams at the Junior Olympics.

Honors Abound

Continued on page 33

coaches and Phil Steele.

"There are a lot more guys who get the reputation than actually live up to the billing," said Saban. "He started as a freshman and has improved every year. I don't see them all, and I'm not saying he is better than anybody else, but it's hard for me to think there is any other offensive lineman who has played any better than him this season."

Another notable individual award went to Alabama freshman wide receiver Julio Jones. Jones was selected as the Columbus (Ohio) Touchdown Club National Freshman of the Year.

Jones, a native of Foley, produced an amazing rookie campaign at Alabama, setting school freshman records for receptions (51), receiving yards (847) and touchdowns (4). He finished fourth in the Southeastern Conference in receiving yards per game at 65.15 and seventh in catches per contest at 3.92. Jones is also quickly moving up the Tide's single-season receiving charts, ranking fifth in receiving yards and tied for eighth in receptions.

Just the 11th true freshman to start a season opener for Alabama since freshmen became eligible again by the NCAA in 1972, Jones was also named the Associated Press and *Sporting News* SEC Freshman of the Year.

He had three 100-yard receiving games with 103 yards at Tennessee, a career-best 128 yards at LSU and 124 yards against Florida in the SEC Championship Game. Jones has been at his best against the best, with 21 receptions for 374 yards and two touchdowns against Clemson, Georgia, LSU and Florida. He has also flourished in hostile environments with 28 receptions for 502 yards away from Bryant-Denny Stadium.

In addition to Smith, who was first team All-America by American Football Coaches (AFCA), Football Writers (FWAA), Walter Camp (WC), *Sporting News* (SN), Associated Press (AP) and *Pro Football Weekly* (PFW), Alabama's first team All-America selections included:

Nose tackle Terrence Cody (AFCA, FWAA, SN, AP), center Antoine Caldwell (AFCA, SN, AP), safety Rashad Johnson (AFCA), and offensive guard Mike Johnson (PFW).

Rashad Johnson was second team by Walter Camp and AP and Cody second team by Walter Camp.

Linebacker Rolando McClain was third team by the AP.

Honorable mention selections by various organizations include:

Wide receiver Julio Jones, Cody, McClain, Rashad Johnson, and cornerback/kick returner Javier Arenas.

Alabama seniors selected for the Senior Bowl in Mobile on January 24 were quarterback John Parker Wilson, tight end Travis McCall, Caldwell and Rashad Johnson.

The Football Writers selected wide receiver Julio Jones and linebacker Dont'a Hightower to the Freshman All-America team.

Hightower, a native of Lewisburg, Tennessee, was fourth on the team with 64 tackles while registering 2.5 tackles for loss and two fumble recoveries. He started 12 games, playing in all 14 contests with six quarterback hurries.

In addition to Jones and Hightower, two other Bama freshmen were named to the Coaches Freshman All-SEC Team. They are running back Mark Ingram and offensive lineman John Michael Boswell.

Alabama placed nine men at 10 positions on the 2008 Coaches All-Southeastern Conference football team. The Crimson Tide had five first team and five second team honorees.

Representing the Tide on the Coaches First Team All-SEC squad are Caldwell, Cody, Rashad Johnson, Rolando McClain and Andre Smith.

Bama's five second-team honorees are Arenas as both a cornerback and kick returner, junior running back Glen Coffee, Mike Johnson and Julio Jones. ■



Andre Smith won Outland Award

Stuart McNair

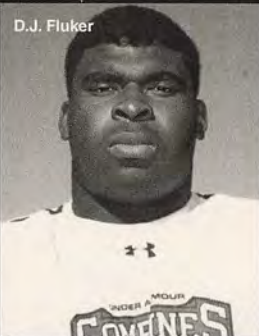
Prep Prospects

Future Tiders featured in all-star games

Dre Kirkpatrick



D.J. Fluker



A.J. McCarron



High School All-Star games are becoming very competitive as three nationally recognized events showcase high school players in the post-season. The U.S. Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio, Texas, the Under Armour All-American Game in Orlando, Florida, and the Offense-Defense Game in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, have a mixture of the elite prospects from across the country.

The U.S. Army and Under Armour games receive the majority of the country's top prospects, but the Offense-Defense game is picking up momentum as one of the premier games of the year.

Six players from the state of Alabama (all with ties to the Crimson Tide) and one out-of-state commitment were selected to participate in the January U.S. Army game. At the time of the broadcast of the games in January 2008, one Alabama commitment participated in the Under Armour game while another played in the Offense-Defense game.

Those in the U.S. Army Game with ties to Bama are

Dre Kirkpatrick, cornerback from Gadsden City; D.J. Fluker, offensive tackle from Foley; A.J. McCarron, quarterback from Mobile St. Paul's; Nico Johnson, linebacker from Andalusia; Kendall Kelly, wide receiver from Gadsden City; Tana Patrick, linebacker from North Jackson in Stephenson; and Chris Bonds, defensive end from Richland Northeast High in Columbia, South Carolina.

Participating in the Offense-Defense Game was Michael Bowman, wide receiver from Ridgeland High in Rossville, Georgia.

Selected for the Under Armour Game was Trent Richardson, running back from Escambia High in Pensacola, Florida.

Here's an update on these top prospects who were showcased nationally in these all-star games:

Dre Kirkpatrick, 6-2, 180, 4.5 40 time, Scout Media five-star cornerback, Gadsden City, is the state's top football prospect. Kirkpatrick brings to the table a combination of size (rare for a cornerback),

speed and athleticism. He reminds many of San Diego Chargers cornerback Antonio Cromartie. Kirkpatrick suffered minor injuries throughout the 2008 season, but still recorded 44 total tackles (24 solo and 20 assists), six interceptions (one returned for a touchdown) and 10 pass breakups. Kirkpatrick also returned three punts for 104 yards. Kirkpatrick was awarded the Class 6A Back of the Year for his performance.

The Gadsden City star fractured his right hand during the second day of practice in San Antonio, but still played in the game. He took an official visit to The University of Alabama the following week.

"I had a lot of fun," said Kirkpatrick. "My mom, dad and I talked to Coach Saban for a long time. We talked about academics, health care, what all they do during the summer. We talked about playing time and how if I work hard I could beat out someone for the starting job."

Scout

Alabama's first commitment, D.J. Fluker of Foley, Scout Media four-star offensive tackle, is one of the biggest players in the country, and the 6-7, 350-pound lineman is still growing. "Big Fluke" has come a long way since the 2007 season when he played defensive tackle. He transferred to Foley from Biloxi last January, returning to Alabama where he had spent the 2006 season at McGill-Toolen High School in Mobile.

Foley Coach Todd Watson moved Fluker to left offensive tackle, and he was an all-state success. He also dominated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star game. Alabama Offensive Line Coach Joe Pendry will have a great (and relatively raw) prospect to work with in teaching technique. You can't teach size or athleticism, and Fluker (who has a 4.9 40 time) has both. He visited Alabama the week following San Antonio for an official visit and was singled out by several other visiting prospects as the highlight of the trip.

"I'd say the best part about my visit was seeing D.J. Fluker moving his feet," Trent Richardson said. "We were at a party, and he was really dancing. They were playing Chris Brown, and he was getting down. He wears a size 22 shoe and was moving really good."

AJ McCarron, 6-4, 190, 4.8, Scout Media four-star quarterback at St. Paul's Episcopal School, Mobile, was offered a scholarship by Alabama in the spring of 2007, but the official offer did not arrive in the mail until September 1. He waited until the spring of 2008 before making a commitment to the Tide. The St. Paul's star won the Class 5A state championship in 2007 by completing 145 of 232 attempts for 2,540 yards and 26 touchdowns with only three interceptions.

McCarron had a great supporting cast in 2007 featuring three Alabama signees with running back Ivan Matchett, wide receiver Destin Hood and athlete Mark Barron. Matchett took a redshirt in the fall of 2008, Barron saw action throughout the year as a freshman while Hood opted for professional baseball.

McCarron passed for 1,700 yards with 19 touchdowns and two interceptions as a senior. He added more than 400 yards rushing. He was a standout at several camps and combines throughout the year including the Elite 11 camp which features the Top 11 quarterbacks in the country.

McCarron was the starting quarterback in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star game, and was part of the rotation of quarterbacks in the U.S. Army All-American game. He led the Alabama All-Stars team to victory in Mobile, but he was on the losing end in San Antonio. McCarron took an official visit to Alabama January 16.

Nico Johnson, 6-2, 235, 4.6, Scout Media five-star middle linebacker from Andalusia, was hopeful as a sophomore to receive an offer from The University of Alabama. Johnson's abilities brought him many more scholarship offers than just the offer from Bama.

Johnson waited until September of his senior year to make a commitment to Alabama. He considered offers from Auburn, Clemson, Florida, LSU and Southern Cal.

Johnson was a star at the Scout Elite camp in Auburn and solidified himself in San Antonio as a five-star prospect.

Johnson had a great week of practice and was a standout in the game. He has all the physical tools to make an immediate impact in Tuscaloosa.

He recorded 78 tackles, 32 assists, one fumble recovery, one blocked punt and 11 interceptions during his senior season. Johnson officially visited Alabama January 16.

"I thought Alabama had an outstanding year," said Johnson. "They had the letdown against Florida, but still played great. We are going to bounce back next year."

Kendall Kelly, 6-3, 220, 4.5, Scout Media four-star wide receiver, suffered from a hamstring injury his senior year at Gadsden City. Kelly rushed for 78 yards on 13 carries for a six yard average. He also caught nine passes for 130 yards for a 14.44 yard average. Kelly returned one kickoff for 38 yards. As a senior, Kelly scored five touchdowns in a season of limited playing time.

He has proven himself as one of the top athletes in the country when healthy. He recorded 34 receptions for 595 yards, rushed 17 times for 189 yards, and scored nine touchdowns as a junior. Kelly participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star game and U.S. Army All-American game.

Kelly visited Tuscaloosa several times in the past year and impressed with the 2008 season.

"The thing that has stood out to me the most about Alabama this year is they finish games," Kelly said. "Last year they weren't finishing games. Everyone is playing real hard and doing their role."

Tana Patrick, 6-3, 225, 4.6, Scout Media four-star strongside linebacker from North Jackson High School, Stevenson, holds several North Jackson career, season, and game records. He had 336 career tackles, 8.5 sacks, two interceptions and five fumble recoveries. Offensively, he had 73 receptions for 1,738 yards and six touchdowns. He was named Class 4A all-state three years, and earned Lineman of the Year in 2008.

Patrick is a star on both sides of the ball, but will play linebacker in college. He started in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star game and the U.S. Army game.

He took his first official



Nico Johnson



Kendall Kelly
Scout.com



Tana Patrick
Scout.com

Scout

visit to Alabama January 9.

"I went down to Alabama and hung out with Dre Kirkpatrick, Patrick Patterson, D.J. Fluker and some of the players," said Patrick. "I got to know the players better, and we had fun."

Chris Bonds, 6-4, 275, 4.8, Scout Media four-star defensive end, Richland Northeast High School, Columbia, South Carolina, suffered through a pair of late season injuries the past two seasons. Bonds suffered a torn ACL in the 10th game of the 2007 season. He had approximately 70 tackles and five sacks prior to the injury.

He missed several games as a senior because of a torn meniscus and had surgery. He returned for his high school playoff games. Bonds was invited to play in the U.S. Army game and went to San Antonio. He was still hampered from the injury and lack of playing time during the season.

Bonds committed to Alabama in November over scholarship offers from Southern Cal, Notre Dame, Florida State, South Carolina and Tennessee.

"It'll be great playing closer to home and having my friends and family able to see me," Bonds said. "I've got grandparents in Mississippi, so that's pretty close to Alabama too. It'll be nice staying closer to home."

Michael Bowman, 6-4, 210, 4.6, Scout Media three-star wide receiver from WR, Ridgeland High School, Rossville, Georgia, is a big, strong physical wide-out who could see significant early playing time. Bowman has a terrific senior season with 30 catches for 1,006 yards and 13 touchdowns. He averaged an astounding 33 yards per catch. Bowman also is an excellent downfield blocker. He has great hands and leaping ability to go up to catch the ball.

Bowman was selected to participate in the Offense-Defense All-American game where he was a standout throughout the week of practice. Bowman was compared all the week to Alabama wide receiver Julio Jones because of size and receiver skills. He committed to Alabama in September over

scholarship offers from Auburn, LSU and Oregon.

"I believe I can go in and help Julio," said Bowman. "I can help get the double teams off of him."

Bowman's older brother, Adarius Bowman, was a star wide receiver for Oklahoma State.

Trent Richardson, 5-10, 225, 4.5, Scout Media five-star running back, Escambia High School, Pensacola, Florida, was a top priority for the Alabama coaching staff. The scholarship offers began to roll in during the spring with more than 50 schools to choose from including Alabama, Florida, LSU, Miami, Tennessee, Auburn, Clemson and Florida State.

Richardson was nicknamed "Mr. 407" in 2007 after rushing for 407 yards in a single game. Richardson entered the 2008 season with a lot of hype, and early in the season earned a new nickname, "Mr. 419," as he bettered his previous record.

Richardson finished the season with 1,849 yards on 191 carries and scored 24 touchdowns. In the Under Armour All-American game, Richardson was rated the top running back. He was spotlighted throughout the week with exceptional speed, power and catching the ball well out of the backfield. He took an official visit to Alabama the following week.

"I spent a lot of time with Coach Burns (Running Backs Coach Burton Burns)," said Richardson. "We just talked about life. We talked about the opportunity I had to come play. They said how much I put in is how much I'll get out. He is a great guy. He is an old-school guy and knows how to relate to the players."

"I spent some time with Coach Saban. He told me about the opportunity I have to come in and play. He told me all the good things I love to hear."

But for Richardson, all that football stuff took a back seat to seeing D.J. Fluker dance.

The state of Alabama had more prospects compete in the U.S. Army All-American game in January of 2009, but the Under Armour game featured the most prospects in January of 2008. University of Alabama players Julio Jones, Tyler Love, B.J. Scott, Jerrell Harris, John Michael Boswell and Courtney Upshaw played the game in Orlando in 2008.

Other Alabama natives who played in the Orlando game in 2008 included Dee Finley (Florida) from Auburn High School, Antoine McClain (Clemson), from Anniston High School and Ben Jones (Georgia) from Centreville Bibb County. William Green (Florida), from Hoover-Spain Park participated in the U.S. Army game last year.

Among other 2009 Alabama prospects:

Rueben Randle, Scout Media five-star wide receiver from Bastrop, Louisiana, Pat Patterson, Scout Media four-star wide receiver from Macon Noxubee County, Mississippi, Barkveious Mingo, Scout Media four-star strongside linebacker from West Monroe, Louisiana, and Morgan Moses, Scout Media four-star offensive tackle from Richmond Meadowbrook, Virginia, played in the U.S. Army game. Chad Bumphis, Scout Media four-star wide receiver from Tupelo, Mississippi, participated in the Offense-Defense game. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE: Daily coverage of Alabama recruiting is available at BamaMag.com



Scout

HOT LIST — Possible 2010 Crimson Tide Prospects

An early look at several players for the recruiting class of 2010. Alabama Football Prospects as determined by Andrew Bone of 'BAMA Magazine and Scout Media

Name	Pos.	Hgt.	Wgt.	Time	Hometown (High School)
Keenan Allen	S	6-3	195	4.5	Greensboro, N.C. (North Guilford)
Markeith Ambles	WR	6-3	185	4.5	McDonough, Ga. (Henry County)
Jamaal Bess	RB	5-9	175	4.4	Athens
Terrence Broadway	QB	6-1	200	4.56	Baton Rouge, La. (Capitol)
Demont Buice	RB	6-2	215	4.48	Gadsden (Gaston)
Ronald Carswell	WR	6-0	180	4.5	Macon, Ga. (Westside)
Kenneth Carter	DT	6-4	267		Greenville
Caleb Castile	WR	5-10	165		Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
B.J. Chitty	WR	6-3	185	4.6	Dothan (Northview)
Demarco Cox	OT	6-8	290		Yazoo City, Miss.
Darren Daniel	QB	6-3	185	4.6	Phenix City (Central)
Michael Dyer	RB	5-10	195	4.5	Little Rock, Ark. (Little Rock Academy)
Quinterrius Eatmon		6-5	305		Prichard (Vigor)
Corey Grant	RB	5-11	185	4.45	Opelika
Brandon Gottfried	WR	6-4	200		Tuscaloosa (American Christian)
Trett Hardman	QB	6-4	185		Cullman (Fairview)
Brad Hefley	OLB	6-4	251	4.6	Riverton, Kansas
Jake Holland	OLB	6-1	220		Pelham
D.J. Howard	RB	5-11	195	4.5	Lincoln
Chase Hughes	C	6-2	280		Springville
Maudrecus Humphrey	WR	6-2	185		Hoover
Barry James	MLB	6-1	250		Mobile (Williamson)
JuWuan James	OT	6-6	285		Suwanee, Ga. (North Gwinnett)
Storm Johnson	RB	6-1	205	4.5	Buford, Ga.
Harrison Jones	TE	6-4	215		Cordova, Tenn. (Evangelical Christian)
Marcus Lattimore	RB	6-0	201	4.5	Duncan, S.C. (Byrnes)
Josh Lawson	DE	6-3	240		Prichard (Vigor)
Jerome Lewis	TE	6-4.5	225	4.75	Rochester, N.Y. (Bishop Kearney)
Shaun Lewis	OLB	6-0	195	4.6	Sugar Land, Texas (Hightower)
Chad Lindsey	OG	6-3	310		The Woodlands, Texas
Wilson Love	DE	6-4	245		Birmingham (Mountain Brook)
Eric Mack	OT	6-5	290		Saint Matthews, S.C. (Calhoun County)
Keiwone Malone	WR	6-1	165	4.5	Memphis, Tenn. (Mitchell Road)
Denzel McCoy	DT	6-4	275		Duluth, Ga. (Northview)
Ted Meline	WR	6-2.5	170	4.4	Miami, Fla. (Washington)
Demarcus Milliner	CB	6-1	175	4.5	Millbrook (Stanhope Elmore)
C.J. Moseley	OLB	6-2	216		Theodore
Solomon Patton	WR	5-9	165	4.4	Mobile (Murphy)
Logan Paul	QB	6-1	185		Gulf Shores
Garry Peters	CB	6-1	180		Conyers, Ga. (Heritage)
Alec Ogletree	OLB	6-2.5	205	4.6	Newnan, Ga.
Jeremy Richardson	WR	6-4	205	4.6	Springville
Damien Robinson	OT	6-8	30		Olive Branch, Miss.
Craig Sanders	DE	6-1	235	4.65	Ariton
Matt Sandlin	QB	6-4	205		Tuscaloosa, Ala. (American Christian)
Justin Shade	OLB	5-10	200	4.5	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
Phillip Sims	QB	6-2	215	4.7	Chesapeake, Va. (Oscar F. Smith)
Jacques Smith	OLB	6-2	235		Ooltewah, Tenn.
Nolen Smith	WR	6-2	180		Oneonta
Ryan Smith	S	6-2	208	4.6	Cordova
James Stone	OG	6-4.5	280		Nashville, Tenn. (Maplewood)
Terrence Swift	OT	6-5	315		Fairfield
Dex Sullivan	OT	6-4.5	305		Cullman (Fairview)
Dale Trimble	CB	5-10	170	4.5	Gadsden (Gadsden City)
Zach Underwood	C	6-3.5	265		Albertville
D.J. Vinson	RB	5-11	190	4.6	Clay-Chalkville
Brian Vogler	TE	6-7.5	237	4.82	Columbus, Ga. (Brookstone School)
Zeke Walters	TE	6-4	200		Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
Matthew Wells	RB	6-0	190	4.5	Monticello, Miss. (Lawrence County)
Jeffrey Whitaker	DT	6-3	299	5.3	Warner Robbins, Ga.
Jawara White	OLB	6-1.5	207	4.5	Troy (Charles Henderson)
Jackie Williams	WR	5-10	175		Semmes (Mary G. Montgomery)
Jarrick Williams	S	6-2	200	4.6	Prichard, Blount

Where Are They Now?

Randy Hall's challenges now in medical field

Four is a prevalent number in the game of football. Four downs to make the requisite ten yards for a first down. Four quarters to compete against the opponent. Dr. Randall Lee Hall has four passions—religion, family, medical profession, and Alabama football. From 1972 through 1974, Randy Hall's focus was in great part on Bama football as he was a defensive tackle for Coach Paul Bryant's Crimson Tide.

Besides having a family medical practice in Fairhope since 2000, Dr. Hall is the medical director of the Montrose Bay Health and Rehab and Mercy Medical Health Care Systems, which includes a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF), Rehab Unit, Hospice and Long-Term Care Unit. These are both located in the Fairhope/Daphne area near his two-story office. "I love my practice here," he said. "We have a wonderful community and some wonderful patients. We just perform out-patient and no longer do the in-patient hospital practice."

Practicing Geriatrics at the two nursing homes makes him a witness to the inevitable hardships families suffer as they attempt to care for elderly family members. "It's a challenge," he said. "People have chronic medical problems that have to be taken care of continually. One of the saddest things is to see people who are physically pretty fit but mentally dementia has kicked in."

Gender specific issues surface with patients. "It's tough on the families to deal with those situations especially men who do not do well when they are not in control," Hall said. "They get frustrated and angry sometimes especially if they were ex-military guys in charge and now they are

frustrated because they can't be in control of their life as much."

The chronic medical conditions in conjunction with the emotional and psychological factors make for a challenging situation not only for the physician but for the family. "The biggest thing is not to try to do it alone," Hall said. "It's a 24-hour, seven days a week job. Family members become fatigued. There is a lot of help out there with medications and home health care and other agencies that help people to deal with their aging parents." Many of his peers wishing to reciprocate all the love and care they have received as children are reluctant to admit the inevitable about their parents. "People don't want to give up and admit the fact that someone is declining. Sometimes they wait too late to get help."



Randy Hall went
from football field
to medical field

Born in Washington, D. C., his Dad was an engineer with the space program who moved the family to Huntsville when he was four years old. The affable Hall has been married to his wife Karen (Engeman) for 34 years. Both 1971 graduates of Huntsville High, they met at church and continued their courtship while students in Tuscaloosa. While Hall was busy each Saturday in the fall competing for the Crimson Tide on the gridiron, Karen was celebrating the many victories playing "Yeah Alabama" as a flutist in the "Million Dollar Band".

Many young men fear the day they must confront their future father-in-laws to ask permission for their daughter's hand in marriage but Hall had other concerns. His anxiety level heightened at the thought of

Bryant Museum

informing Coach Bryant his intentions to marry before his senior year at Alabama. Gazing up from the infamous sinking couch located in Bryant's office, Hall faced the intimidating task master who was perched high above behind his big desk. "I was scared to death. As I sat down I was sweating. My heart was beating fast and I told him we wanted to get married. He mumbled two can't live as cheaply as one but you have my blessing. I think he liked me. He was harder than asking my father-in-law. We decided we didn't want to start medical school and a marriage at the same time so we got married a year ahead."

After graduating from The Capstone in the spring of 1975 Hall attended medical school at The University of Alabama in Birmingham for a couple of years before finishing his last two years of training at the Huntsville branch. The smaller setting at the UAH campus of the university system was deemed more appropriate for his pursuit as a family practitioner. Majoring in biology and minoring in chemistry, Hall was always encouraged to study by his father, an engineering graduate. He considered becoming an engineer but as he explained, "I've always combined my ability to study and to learn with my love for people. That's why I decided to go into family practice and not be an engineer. I'm more of a people person and not an academician kind of person."

Hall's legacy as a scholar-athlete as measured by the academic honors bestowed on him while at The University is unparalleled—Academic All-Southeastern Conference and All-America in 1973 and 1974, Phi Beta Kappa 1974, NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship Winner 1975, National Football Foundation Scholar-Athlete Award 1974 and the NCAA Top V Award 1975 (presently named Top VIII Award). Traveling to New York City to attend the NFF Annual Awards Dinner with his wife and parents for the black tie affair at the Waldorf-Astoria was especially gratifying. Among the other honorees were Harvard's Pat McNally, USC's Pat Haden and the late Pete Demmerle of Notre Dame, who played wide receiver for the Fighting Irish and caught the two-point conversion against Alabama in the 1973 Sugar Bowl game. Meeting and having a photo opportunity with President Gerald R. Ford on the award banquet circuit was one of the highlights for Hall. Art Linkletter was the master of ceremonies for the 69th annual NCAA Convention at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington, D. C. where Hall received the Top V Award.

Hall referenced the influential role Bryant played behind the scenes as telephone calls suspending formal protocol made on his behalf by his coach created opportunities of a lifetime for the beholding quintessential scholar-athlete. "He nominated me for some post graduate scholarships," Hall said. "Throughout my senior year he called me 'Doctor Hall.' He was amazing."

After finishing his residency in Huntsville, he settled in South Alabama, in Geneva, for four years where he adopted a high school aged foster son, Larry Ashley, who went onto to play football at Southern Mississippi. Ashley is now a major in the Okaloosa County, Florida Sheriff's Department. "He's married with three beautiful children. He's a great young man and we're very proud of him," Hall said.

Hall and his wife have two children. Jeremy, 18 and Olivia, 13, attend East Hill Christian School. Jeremy is a senior and will be attending Samford University next fall and plans to be a youth minister. Olivia, an eight-grader, is a dancer and competes on the volleyball team. The family cares for his mother-in-law at their Pensacola home. The Halls moved to the Florida Panhandle in

1986. Hall is an elder of the Trinity Presbyterian Church and he and his wife have been active with the youth and music programs. He also practiced in the beachside community for 15 years before establishing his Fairhope office.

Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, a family man's paradise, is a frequent destination since they have a condo in Cocoa Beach. A Disney cruise and travel to Scotland and Canada have been recent excursions since the children have become older. Weekends usually revolve around the children's activities unless Hall pre-empts the schedule.

He enthusiastically anticipates watching his beloved Crimson Tide on television each Saturday in the fall. "When Alabama's playing, leave me alone," he said. "I don't go to parties to watch it. I'm interested in watching the football game. We'll visit later after we win." Nose guard Terrence Cody who happens to wear Hall's number 62 has garnered his attention, although his favorite player was left tackle Andre Smith. Nick Saban's approach to resurrect the program resonates with the former defensive tackle.

"I am very impressed with Coach Saban, even though I have not had the opportunity to meet him," Hall said. "He reminds me so much of Coach Bryant with his attitude, his focus and the way he has the players competing and believing. He brings back a lot of good memories from Coach Bryant's era."

Hall's second floor north side office wall is adorned with a large painting of the legendary Coach Bryant. A captivating pitch black night view of the circle of coaches in the plaza outside Bryant-Denny Stadium's north end zone highlighted by a lightning bolt piercing the sky is displayed on the computer's desktop screen. Along with a cell phone ringing "Yea, Alabama" those are some of the tangible testaments that his blood still bleeds crimson. "I have a room that we recently painted crimson and gray with two big glass cabinets full of Alabama memorabilia," he said. "We're going to have more here in a couple of years honoring Coach Saban's success. Obviously, I'm an avid fan."

Before he was a fan, he was a player for the legendary Bryant. Hall said, "He was very intimidating but it was such an honor to play for him."

Hall adheres to the philosophy he learned while playing under Bryant. "Basically it's self discipline and dedication," he said. "Focus on what you need to know and what you need to do and don't get distracted by other things."

"I'm a very strong Christian. You do the right thing. You treat people right. That's one thing I learned from Coach Bryant," he said. "A lot of people know that he was tough but if you played your heart out for Coach Bryant, he would do anything in the world for you. He loved his players. He did the right thing for people. He was always nice to people he met. That rubs off on you if you're around it enough; how you treat people, especially women. He was always a gentleman. He was always courteous to people and polite. He wasn't always like that to us on the field at practice, but also one thing I learned from him was humility. He would say it was always his fault. I didn't teach them right. I was the reason we lost the game. He might not say that at practice, but that was his public persona. I learned that from him. I always say I apologize and say I was wrong even if I wasn't. You learn humility and to do the right thing. He was a great man and a great coach."

"I've had a great life. I've worked hard. I have a very big practice. I'm a people person. Obviously I'm passionate about Alabama football and fortunately my wife is too."

MEN'S & WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD

DATE	EVENT
Jan. 9-10	@ Clemson Invitational (W)
Jan. 17	Kentucky Invitational (M)
Jan. 24	Arkansas Invitational (M)
Jan. 31	@ Nebraska Invitational (W)
Feb. 6-7	Mevo Invitational (M&W)
Feb. 6-7	@ Kentucky Invitational (W)
Feb. 13-14	@ Arkansas Invitational (W)
Feb. 14	Washington Invitational (M)
Feb. 27-	SEC Championships
March 1	@ Lexington, Ky. (M&W)
March 13-14	NCAA Championships @ College Station, Texas (M&W)

2008-09 ALABAMA WINTER SPORTS SCHEDULES

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SWIMMING & DIVING

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Sept. 27	Delta State (M&W) & Vanderbilt (W)	1:00
Oct. 11	@ FSU	Noon
Oct. 24	@ SMU Classic (W)	6:00
Nov. 7	@ LSU	3:00
Nov. 8	Centenary & UNO @ New Orleans	11:00
Nov. 14	Western Kentucky	3:00
Nov. 20	@ Georgia Tech diving	TBA
Nov. 21	Auburn	All Day
Dec. 4	US Short @ Atlanta	All Day
Dec. 18	@ Auburn diving	TBA
Jan. 3	@ Tennessee diving	TBA
Jan. 17	@ Kentucky	1:00
Jan. 31	South Carolina & Georgia	1:00
Feb. 18	SEC Championships @ Auburn	All Day
Feb. 28	@ Georgia Invite	All Day
March 8	@ Auburn Invite	All Day
March 13	NCAA Zone Diving, Knoxville	
March 26	NCAA Championships @ College Station, Texas	

GYMNASTICS

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Jan. 9	@ Auburn	7:00
Jan. 16	Kentucky	7:30
Jan. 23	@ Georgia	6:30
Jan. 27	@ Arkansas	7:00
Feb. 6	Denver	7:30
Feb. 13	LSU	7:30
Feb. 20	@ Florida	6:00
Feb. 27	Auburn	7:30
March 1	Penn State & Ohio State @ Penn State	1:00
March 6	Stanford	7:30
March 13	North Carolina & Oklahoma	7:30
March 21	SEC Championships @ Nashville	4:00
April 4	NCAA Regionals	6:00
April 16-18	NCAA Championships @ Lincoln, Neb.	

MEN'S BASKETBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Nov. 2	Crimson-White Exh.	4:00
Nov. 6	Faulkner Exh.	7:00
Nov. 13	Belhaven Exh.	7:00
Nov. 16	Mercer	6:00
Nov. 19	Florida A&M	8:00 (CSS)
Nov. 24-26	Maui Invitational	
Nov. 24	Oregon	11:00
Nov. 25	North Carolina or Chalmers	TBA
Nov. 26	Texas, St. Joseph's, Notre Dame or Indiana	TBA
Dec. 2	Alabama A&M	7:00
Dec. 6	Louisiana-Lafayette	6:00
Dec. 13	Texas A&M	7:00 (CSS)
Dec. 17	Tennessee State	7:00 (CSS)
Dec. 22	Chattanooga	7:00
Dec. 28	Yale	6:00
Dec. 30	Quincy	7:00
Jan. 3	Georgia Tech	2:00 (FoxS)
Jan. 6	@ Clemson	8:00 (FoxS)
Jan. 11	LSU	12:30 or 3:00 (Raycom)
Jan. 14	@ Mississippi State	7:00
Jan. 17	@ Auburn	1:00
Jan. 21	Ole Miss	7:00
Jan. 24	Kentucky	2:00 (Raycom)
Jan. 29	@ Arkansas	8:00 (ESPN)
Jan. 31	Georgia	6:00 (FoxS)
Feb. 5	@ Vanderbilt	6:00 (ESPN)
Feb. 8	@ LSU	Noon (Raycom)
Feb. 14	South Carolina	2:00 (Raycom)
Feb. 18	@ Florida	6:00
Feb. 21	Mississippi State	2:00 (Raycom)
Feb. 25	Arkansas	7:00
Feb. 28	@ Ole Miss	3:00 (Raycom)
March 3	Auburn	8:00 (ESPN)
March 8	@ Tennessee	11:00 (CBS)
March 12-15	SEC Tournament @ Tampa, Fla.	

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Nov. 8	West Alabama	TBA
Nov. 14	Centenary	TBA
Nov. 18	Samford	TBA
Nov. 22	@ Hampton	TBA
Nov. 25	Alabama State	TBA
Nov. 28-29	@ Nuggett Classic, Reno, Nev.	
Dec. 3	UCF	TBA
Dec. 7	Sam Houston State	TBA
Dec. 14	@ MTSU	TBA
Dec. 17	Florida A&M	
Dec. 22	Austin Peay	TBA
Dec. 29-30	Tide Holiday Classic	
Dec. 29	Belmont	TBA
Dec. 30	Ball State or Richmond	TBA
Jan. 3	@ SE Louisiana	TBA
Jan. 8	Vanderbilt	7:00
Jan. 11	@ LSU	2:00
Jan. 15	Kentucky	TBA
Jan. 18	@ Ole Miss	2:00
Jan. 22	@ Auburn	8:00
Jan. 25	Georgia	2:00
Feb. 1	@ Vanderbilt	2:00
Feb. 5	Florida	TBA
Feb. 8	Auburn	2:00
Feb. 12	@ Tennessee	6:00
Feb. 15	@ South Carolina	2:00
Feb. 19	Ole Miss	6:00
Feb. 22	@ Arkansas	2:00
March 1	Mississippi State	TBA
March 5-8	SEC Tournament @ North Little Rock, Ark.	

BASEBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Feb. 20	Southeast Missouri	6:35
Feb. 21	Southeast Missouri	4:05
Feb. 22	Southeast Missouri	2:05
Feb. 24	Nicholls State	6:35
Feb. 25	Nicholls State	6:35
Feb. 27	Illinois-Chicago	6:35
Feb. 28	Illinois-Chicago (DH)	1:05
Mar. 1	Illinois-Chicago	1:05
Mar. 3	@ Troy	6:00
Mar. 5-7	Whataburger Classic @ Corpus Christi	
Mar. 10	Auburn @ Montgomery	6:30
Mar. 11	Samford	6:35
Mar. 13	Georgia	6:35
Mar. 14	Georgia	4:05
Mar. 15	Georgia	2:05
Mar. 17	Alabama A&M	6:35
Mar. 18	Alabama A&M	6:35
Mar. 20	@ Ole Miss	6:30
Mar. 21	@ Ole Miss	1:30
Mar. 22	@ Ole Miss	1:30
Mar. 24	UAB	6:35
Mar. 25	UAB @ Hoover	6:30
Mar. 27	@ Florida	5:30
Mar. 28	@ Florida	3:00
Mar. 29	@ Florida	Noon
Mar. 31	SE Louisiana	6:35
Apr. 1	Mississippi Valley	6:35
Apr. 3	Tennessee	6:35
Apr. 4	Tennessee	4:05
Apr. 5	Tennessee	2:05
Apr. 7	Troy	6:35
Apr. 10	LSU	6:35
Apr. 11	LSU	4:05
Apr. 12	LSU	2:05
Apr. 14	Mississippi Valley	6:35
Apr. 15	@ Samford	6:30
Apr. 17	@ Vanderbilt	6:00
Apr. 18	@ Vanderbilt	3:00
Apr. 19	@ Vanderbilt	1:00
Apr. 22	@ South Alabama	6:00
Apr. 24	Kentucky	6:35
Apr. 25	Kentucky	4:05
Apr. 26	Kentucky	2:05
Apr. 29	South Alabama	6:35
May 1	@ Mississippi State	6:30
May 2	@ Mississippi State	6:30
May 3	@ Mississippi State	1:30
May 8	Arkansas	6:35
May 9	Arkansas	4:35
May 10	Arkansas	2:05
May 14	@ Auburn	6:00
May 15	@ Auburn	6:00
May 16	@ Auburn	3:00
May 20-24	SEC Tournament	@ Hoover
May 29-31	NCAA Regionals	
June 5-8	NCAA Super Regionals	
June 13-24	College World Series	@ Omaha

SOFTBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Feb. 7	@ South Alabama Classic	
Feb. 13	BAMA BASH (Notre Dame, East Carolina, Wisconsin) Palm Springs Classic	
Feb. 19	BYU	12:30
Feb. 19	Oregon	6:00
Feb. 20	UCLA	8:00
Feb. 21	Oklahoma	5:30
Feb. 21	Hawaii	8:00
Feb. 27	Leadoff Classic @ Columbus, Ga.	
Mar. 4	@ UAB	6:30
Mar. 6	Washington	6:00
Mar. 7	Washington	1:30
Mar. 7	Baylor	4:00
Mar. 8	Baylor	1:30
Mar. 12	Mississippi Valley	6:30
Mar. 14	Mississippi State (DH)	1:00
Mar. 15	Mississippi State	1:30
Mar. 18	@ LSU (DH)	5:00
Mar. 21	@ Ole Miss (DH)	TBA
Mar. 22	@ Ole Miss	TBA
Mar. 25	Samford	6:30
Mar. 28	@ Florida (DH)	TBA
Mar. 29	@ Florida	TBA
Apr. 1	Troy	6:00
Apr. 4	Georgia (DH)	1:00
Apr. 5	Georgia	1:30
Apr. 10	@ South Carolina (DH)	5:00
Apr. 11	@ South Carolina	2:00
Apr. 14	Kentucky (DH)	3:00
Apr. 18	Arkansas (DH)	1:00
Apr. 19	Arkansas	1:30
Apr. 22	@ Georgia Tech	6:00
Apr. 25	Auburn (DH)	1:00
Apr. 26	Auburn	1:30
May 2	@ Tennessee (DH)	1:00
May 3	@ Tennessee	12:30
May 7	SEC Tournament @ Knoxville	
May 15	NCAA Regionals	
May 22	NCAA Super Regionals	
May 28	World Series @ Oklahoma City	

MEN'S TENNIS

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Jan. 9	Key Biscayne Inv.	
Jan. 16	SEC Indoors	
Jan. 24	Troy	10 a.m.
Jan. 24	Furman	3:00
Jan. 31	Miami @ Malibu	2:00
Feb. 1	Indoor @ Malibu	
Feb. 8	Samford	Noon
Feb. 8	UAB	5:00
Feb. 13	Chicago National	
Feb. 15	@ Clemson	1:00
Feb. 21	@ Indiana	1:00
Mar. 1	Memphis	10 a.m.
Mar. 1	Jacksonville State	3:00
Mar. 6	@ Arkansas	1:30
Mar. 8	@ LSU	1:00
Mar. 13	Ole Miss	2:00
Mar. 15	Mississippi State	1:00
Mar. 19	Blue-Gray @ Montgomery	
Mar. 27	@ Kentucky	3:00
Mar. 29	Vanderbilt	1:00
Apr. 3	@ Tennessee	TBA
Apr. 5	@ Georgia	1:00
Apr. 10	Florida	3:00
Apr. 12	South Carolina	1:00
Apr. 18	@ Auburn	5:00
Apr. 23	SEC @ Columbia, S.C.	
May 8	NCAA Regionals	
May 14	NCAA Championships @ College Station, Texas	

WOMEN'S TENNIS

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Jan. 16	@ Northwestern Inv.	
Jan. 25	Chattanooga	1:00
Jan. 30	Tulane	4:00
Feb. 1	Georgia State	Noon
Feb. 7	Oklahoma	11:00
Feb. 14	Iowa	Noon
Feb. 22	Samford	10 a.m.
Feb. 22	Southern Miss	3:00
Feb. 28	@ TCU	Noon
Mar. 6	Arkansas	3:00
Mar. 8	LSU	1:00
Mar. 11	Marquette	3:00
Mar. 13	@ Ole Miss	3:00
Mar. 15	@ Mississippi State	1:00
Mar. 23	Oregon	3:00
Mar. 27	Kentucky 3:00	
Mar. 29	@ Vanderbilt	Noon
Apr. 3	Tennessee	3:00
Apr. 5	Georgia	1:00
Apr. 10	@ Florida	2:00
Apr. 12	@ South Carolina	1:00
Apr. 18	Auburn	5:00
Apr. 23	SEC Championships @ Fayetteville	
May 8	NCAA Regionals	
May 15	NCAA Championships @ College Station, Texas	

2009 ALABAMA SPRING SPORTS SCHEDULES

MEN'S GOLF

DATE	EVENT
Feb. 22-24	John Hayt @ Sawgrass
Feb. 27-Mar. 2	Puerto Rico Classic Callaway Match Play @ Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.
Mar. 22-24	U.S. Collegiate @ Alpharetta, Ga. SEC Championships @ St. Simon's Island, Ga.
May 14-17	NCAA Regionals
May 27-30	NCAA Championships @ Inverness, Ohio

WOMEN'S GOLF

DATE	EVENT
Mar. 8-10	Central Florida Inv.
Mar. 21-22	First Market @ Williamsburg
Mar. 27-29	Liz Murphy @ Athens, Ga.
Apr. 6-7	Lady Gator
Apr. 17-19	SEC Championships @ Blythewood, S.C.
May 7-9	NCAA Regionals
May 19-22	NCAA Championships @ Owings Mill, Md.

MEN'S & WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD

DATE	EVENT
Mar. 26	Alabama Relays
Mar. 27	Stanford Inv. (W)
Apr. 3	Florida Relays
Apr. 11	Ole Miss Inv.
Apr. 23	Drake Relays
May 2	Mississippi Open
May 2	@ Stanford (M)
May 14	SEC Championships @ Gainesville
May 29	NCAA Midwest @ Louisville
June 10	NCAA Championships @ Fayetteville

ROWING

DATE	OPPONENT
Mar. 14	@ Clemson
Mar. 17	Kansas State
Mar. 28	@ Tennessee
Apr. 4	SMU & UNC
Apr. 18	Southern Intercollegiate @ Oak Ridge, Tenn.
May 8	Dad Vail @ Philadelphia
May 16	South/Central Sprints @ Oak Ridge, Tenn.

A photograph of a NASCAR race at night. In the foreground, a blue and yellow Lowe's Chevrolet Impala SS is visible. Behind it, a yellow and black Irwin Industrial Tools Ford Fusion is seen. Further back, several other race cars are lined up. The track is illuminated by bright lights, and a large, curved, textured wall is on the left. A person in a green shirt is visible on a platform above the track, holding a checkered flag. A sign for the 'CHECKER O'Reilly AUTO RENTS 500' is also visible.

by Dustin Long, FoxSports.com

WHY NASCAR?

NINE DRIVERS TO WATCH IN 2009



1. Jimmie Johnson

In an age of parity, he's won three titles in a row. Can he make it four?



2. Kyle Busch

Started strong in 2008 but fizzled during the Chase. Can NASCAR's bad boy learn from his failure?



3. Carl Edwards

Was second best in Cup and Nationwide last year. Is 2009 the year he finally claims the Cup trophy?

WHY NOT?



Yes, yes, we know this isn't a story about Alabama Athletics but come on, you love cars, you love drama. There is more in life than Bama Sports, isn't there?

The biggest question entering the 2009 NASCAR Sprint Cup season isn't if **Jimmie Johnson** will win a fourth consecutive series title. No, the main question is how **Tony Stewart** will do with his new team.

He knows that assuming 50 percent ownership of what is now **Stewart-Haas Racing** guarantees nothing – except maybe several headaches.

Stewart's Herculean task of turning the uncompetitive team into a contender could be how the 37-year-old will be best remembered instead of his two series titles. Stewart says he's ready for the daunting challenge.

"There's not really going to be an offseason," Stewart said late in 2008. "We're going to work from Monday after Homestead all the way through until we get to Daytona and then the work is not going to stop after we get to Daytona either. We're going to be pretty busy for the next year. We're going to stay real busy."

Stewart's quest is one of many that will make 2009 intriguing. Among the storylines to watch:

- Can Johnson win a record-breaking fourth consecutive series title?
- How will the economy impact a sport that saw layoffs at the end of the 2008 season?
- Can **Dale Earnhardt Jr.** rise to title contender or will he disappoint his fans again?
- Will **Mark Martin** win that elusive series title?
- What changes will NASCAR announce next year?

Stewart's move, though, tops them all. For now. He bid adieu to **Joe Gibbs Racing** – the only team he'd driven for in Cup since his 1999 debut – after the season finale at Homestead. Stewart admitted that was a tough weekend and a group picture on pit road shortly before the race only heightened the emotions.



4. Dale Earnhardt Jr.

NASCAR's most popular driver is at the strongest organization. Will he finally win the title?



5. David Ragan

Showed significant improvement in 2008. Is this the year he proves he belongs among the best?



6. Greg Biffle

Surprised many by winning back-to-back races to start the 2008 Chase. Can he repeat the feat in '09?



7. Tony Stewart

Doing it his way this year with his own team. Will he have the same success he had at Gibbs?

Stewart can't afford to look back to that weekend. His task is to make his team into something that can compete quickly.

Only one driver older than 37 years old has won a Cup title since 1997. Stewart's title hopes dim with each year it takes to rebuild his team.

Before Stewart's arrival, **Haas CNC Racing** was better known for having its founder jailed for tax fraud than even its poor performance. Making its debut in 2002, the team has never won a Cup race. In 284 career starts, the Chevrolet team has one top-five and 15 top-10 finishes.

There is reason for Stewart fans to hope. The team remains tied to **Hendrick Motorsports**, which provides technical support, chassis and engines. Stewart enticed **Ryan Newman** to leave **Penske Racing** – where Newman won last year's Daytona 500 – to join his new team.

Darian Grubb, a former crew chief and lead engineer at Hendrick, will be Stewart's crew chief. **Tony Gibson** leaves **Dale Earnhardt Inc.** to be Newman's crew chief. **Bobby Hutchens**, who oversaw teams at **Richard Childress Racing** and then DEI, joins Stewart to be the team's director of competition.

More have come. Stewart appears to be the one person who has benefited from the economic downturn that caused nearly every team to lay off personnel.

"You have so many people that are getting released from teams," he said. "All of a sudden there is this huge talent pool."

Layoffs became common last season in a sport fat with personnel. Teams hired extra help to build new cars in 2007 when the series ran the Car of Tomorrow in nearly half the races and last season when the car was exclusively used.

As the economy soured, more companies were hesitant to pay \$20 million or more for a primary sponsorship. That's caused Cup teams to cut costs – often personnel – and be more creative in marketing strategies.

Several Cup teams let personnel go during the season or after it. Dale Earnhardt Inc.'s merger with **Chip Ganassi Racing** cost more than 100 DEI employees their job. **Furniture Row Racing** announced it would scale back from fulltime to part-time this season. **Bill Davis Racing** let most of its Cup personnel go after the season since it hadn't found a sponsor for 2009 at that point.

Teams aren't the only ones facing financial strains. **Ford**, **General Motors** and **Dodge** pledged to continue supporting Cup teams but admitted to scaling back in certain areas, from support in the truck series to track sponsorships.

As the manufacturers struggle and teams look to pare costs, the theme remains the same this season: "Beat Jimmie Johnson."

The three-time defending series champ will attempt to do what no driver has done in the sport's history by winning a fourth championship in a row. He'll again have crew chief **Chad Knaus** on the pit box, making Johnson the preseason favorite for many to win yet another title.

Johnson's dominance in the Chase has led to this success. Fourteen of his 40 career victories have come in the Chase. That's given him the opportunity to make history this year with a fourth title in a row.

"I would be glad to be the guy to deny him that chance," **Carl Edwards** said.

Edwards will be one of Johnson's main competitors for the title after Edwards finished second in both the 2008 Cup and Nationwide standings. Another key foe will be **Kyle Busch**, along with others who could pop up and surprise fans as Busch did in his first season with Gibbs.

Busch looked to be headed toward a title when he won seven of the first 19 Cup races, finishing that streak with a stirring come-from-behind rally at **Chicagoland Speedway** where he passed Johnson for the lead with two laps to go.

Busch won only one more Cup race the rest of the year and finishes of 34th or worse in the first two Chase races ended his title hopes.

Busch admitted in November he was looking forward to "having the race season over and starting fresh in '09."

A fresh start is something Earnhardt is looking forward to having after he finished last in the Chase.

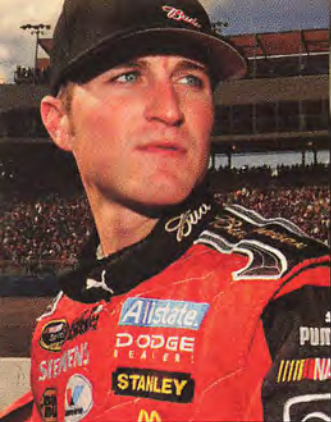
Many among Junior Nation would like to see crew chief **Tony Eury Jr.** dumped, yet Earnhardt steadfastly supports his cousin.

Former champion **Rusty Wallace** sparked debate late last season when he said that Earnhardt had not shown much improvement in his first year at **Hendrick Motorsports** after having left DEI.

"The only thing that is better is he hasn't broke down this year," Wallace said before the season's next-to-last race at Phoenix. "Last year, he broke down a lot, blown motors. This year he hasn't had the blown motors and he's higher in the points and he's in the Chase."

Even car owner **Rick Hendrick** was critical of his new driver at the beginning of the **Chase for the Sprint Cup**. Hendrick said that Earnhardt needed to control his emotions more on the radio when things didn't go well. That's a minor issue compared to what Earnhardt needs to do.

"I would have liked to perform better on the race track in the last half of the season," said Earnhardt, who finished 20th or worse in seven of the final 15 races of the season. "The second half of the year we still ran up front a lot, we ran really well every



8. Kasey Kahne

The Dodge camp's great hope needs more consistency to be a threat. Will he shine or fizzle in '09?



9. Jeff Gordon

Winningest current driver went winless in 2008. Was it a fluke or are his best days behind him?

weekend but I couldn't get the finishes I was wanting to get and it was getting frustrating at times."

Earnhardt's new teammate, **Mark Martin**, could help. Martin, known for his steady driving and consistent finishes, joins Hendrick Motorsports in what is being billed as his final attempt at an elusive Cup title.

Martin carries the title of best driver without a Cup title. He had the unfortunate luck of having his best season in 1998 when **Jeff Gordon** had one of the sport's greatest seasons. Martin also has finished runner-up to **Dale Earnhardt** twice and Stewart once. Martin lost two titles by less than 50 points.

"The number one factor for me was to drive a car that I thought I could win in," Martin explained for his reason to run a fulltime schedule again after two seasons of part-time duty.

One of the challenges Martin will face is working with his team at Cup tracks. With the economy souring, NASCAR officials canceled testing for 2009 at tracks that host Cup, Nationwide, truck or **Camping World East** or **West** series races. There still will be some tracks to test but the policy was intended to save teams money. Whether that works will be interesting, as a clear divide between the sport's top teams and middle-tier teams grows. Only 12 drivers won Cup races last year, the fewest since 1999.

If the economy does not rebound next year, NASCAR could extend the testing ban and make other changes to help teams save money.

Another key issue off the track will be what NASCAR does for 2010 and beyond. **Kansas Speedway** wants a second race date by 2011. Where that date will come from – NASCAR won't expand the schedule – is the cause of much speculation.

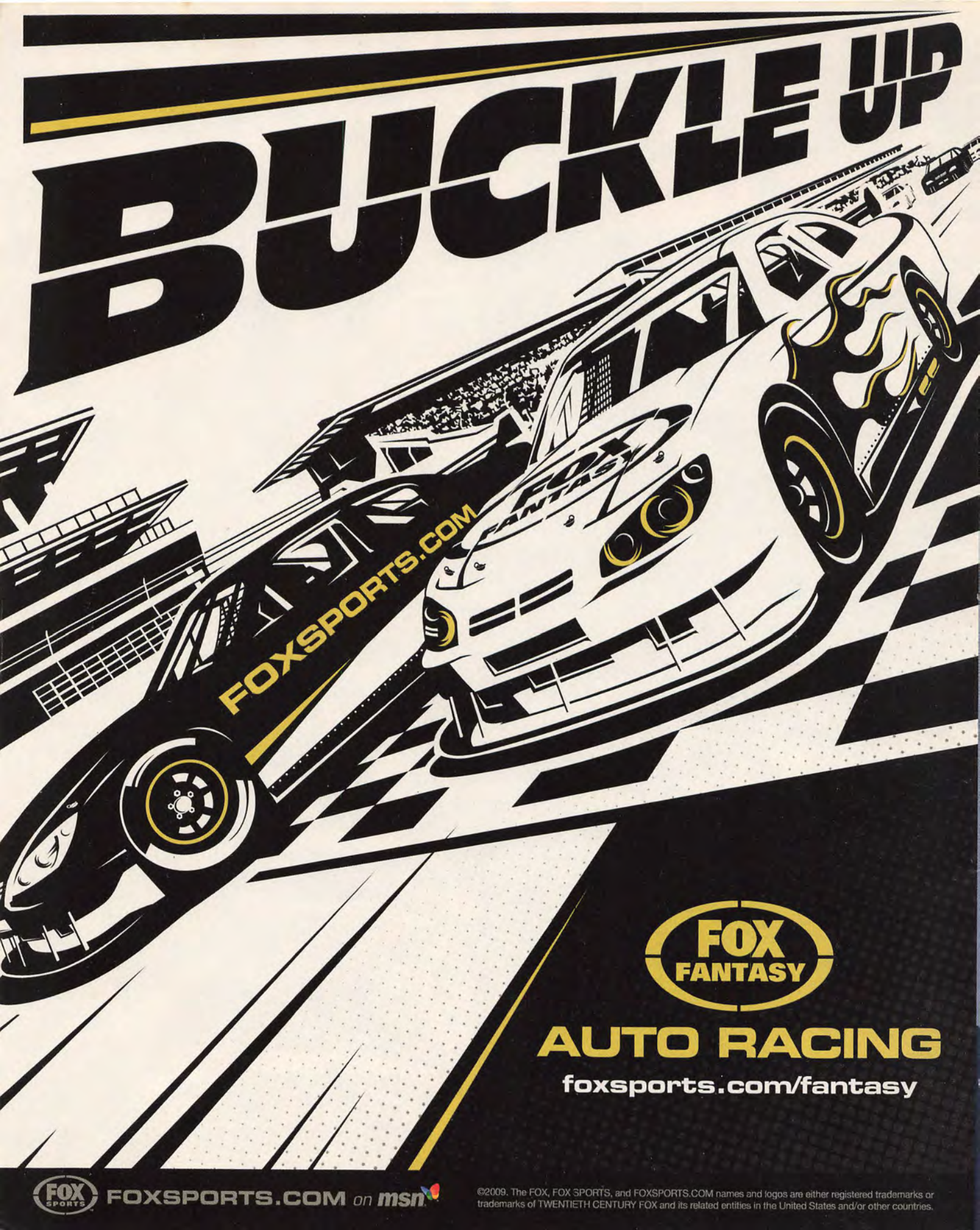
Also, NASCAR pledged no changes to the Chase for this season but there could be changes in 2010 if the Chase again fails to deliver any excitement at the end of the season. The point spread between first and second entering the season finale has grown each year of the 5-year-old Chase. Johnson entered this year's finale with a 141-point lead on **Carl Edwards**, leaving little drama for many fans.

Of course there are other questions. When or if **Jeff Gordon**, **Matt Kenseth** and **Kevin Harvick** will win again after being shut out in 2008? Can other teams put a car in the Chase other than Hendrick, Roush, Gibbs and Childress, as this past year? Can the merger between **DEI** and **Ganassi** make **Juan Pablo Montoya** relevant again?

And just how will **Tony Stewart** make his new team relevant and competitive?

Those and many other questions could make 2009 one of the more captivating seasons for fans. ■





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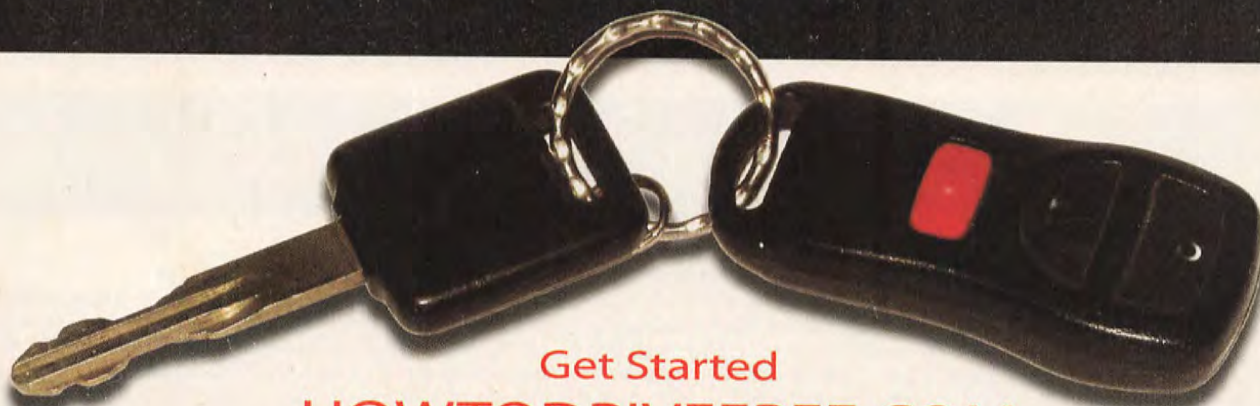
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